THE KINGDOM IN HISTORY AND PROPHECY

• LEWIS • SPERRY • CHAFER •

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The Kingdom in History and Prophecy

BY

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Dedicated to
the memory of my father
The Rev. Thomas Franklin Chafer,
with the Lord since 1882

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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Introduction

A CLEAR and thoroughly Biblical book on the kingdom in the Scriptures has long been a *desideratum*. Perhaps no truth of the divine revelation has suffered more at the hands of interpreters than that concerning the kingdom. Following the Roman Catholic interpretation, Protestant theology has very generally taught that all the kingdom promises, and even the great Davidic Covenant itself, are to be fulfilled in and through the Church. The confusion thus created has been still further darkened by the failure to distinguish the different phases of kingdom truth indicated by the expressions "kingdom of heaven," and "kingdom of God."

In the light of plain Scripture all of these confusions are inexcusable, for at no point is the Biblical revelation more clear and explicit. Founded upon the covenant of Jehovah with David, a covenant subsequently confirmed by Jehovah's oath, the great theme of predictive prophecy is that kingdom. Even the order of the setting up of the kingdom, relatively to the great Gentile world-empires, is declared. The events attending the setting up of the kingdom of the heavens on the earth are described.

The New Testament carries forward the Old Testament foreview of the kingdom into greater detail, but without change. The very first mention of Christ in the first verse of the first chapter in the New Testament identifies Him with the Davidic Covenant, and the promise of Gabriel to His virgin mother is a new confirmation in express terms of that covenant.

The New Testament reveals the present age as a parenthesis in the prophetic program during which the Church is called out from among the Gentiles, a stranger and pilgrim body, belonging to the kingdom of God, but in no sense identical with the kingdom of heaven.

I welcome therefore this present book on these fundamental truths. Having had the privilege of seeing it in manuscript, I bespeak for it the candid attention of all who are concerned for the truth of God.

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Preface

MANY valuable books have been written on the general subjects related to the kingdom. A partial list of these is appended herewith; but no similar work covering, in brief form, the historic and prophetic aspects of the kingdom in their relation to the present age-purpose was known to the writer: hence this volume. It is hoped that this book will prove a comprehensive, if not exhaustive, treatise on this important theme.

It has not seemed expedient to deal with all problems of interpretation when they first appear in the discussion. Therefore the general difficulties arising in this study are taken up, so far as the writer is able, in what may seem to him to be the most appropriate place, and the reader to whom this interpretation is new is requested to withhold all judgments and conclusions until the various aspects of this revelation, here dealt with, have been considered.

May the Spirit, whose office work it is to guide into all truth and to show us things to come, guide in the study of what it has pleased our God to reveal of His purpose and plan in the realization of His kingdom in the earth.

LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER.

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I

THE THEME

THE Bible revelation regarding the kingdom presents the purpose, process and final realization of a divine government in the earth. This objective is the heart of the kingdom prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done *in earth*, as it is in heaven." The kingdom revelation is a distinct body of Scripture running through both the Old Testament and the New and its study, of necessity, leads to some definite conclusions touching the meaning of much unfulfilled prophecy, the two advents of Christ, the present age of Grace and the future of both Jews and Gentiles.

Considering only kingdom passages, both historical and prophetic, such definite conclusions are not difficult from the fact that this revelation is presented in those Scriptures which are more easily harmonized than the familiar body of truth from which are drawn the doctrines of salvation. Salvation revelations are sufficiently clear; but upon them the theological discussions of centuries have been centered. On the other hand, such general study has not been given to kingdom truths. In fact, many students of theology are confessedly ignorant on this subject. However, there is no conflict between Salvation and Kingdom themes. They cover widely different fields of Biblical doctrine.

In view of these facts, it may be helpful to note some of the essential values accruing from, and conditions governing, the study of kingdom truth:

1. Bible interpretation is incomplete without it.

It stands to reason, since one-fourth of the Bible is in prophetic form, and five-sixths of the Bible is addressed to one nation to whom the kingdom promises are given, that any plan of study which avoids prophecy and ignores, or "spiritualizes," God's covenants with His chosen earthly people will be incomplete, misleading and subject to mere human assumptions.

The accurate study of the kingdom in the Old Testament and the New affords the only comprehensible approach to the New Testament doctrines of "This present evil age" (Gal. i. 4), "The church which is his body" (Eph. i. 22, 23), and "Things to come" (Jno. xvi. 13).

It has been pointed out that two distinct revelations were given to the Apostle Paul. In Arabia he received directly from God the gospel of grace (Gal. i. 11, 12) which he has presented, in the main, in the Roman and Galatian letters. This is a revelation of a new order, a new relationship to God, which is neither a perpetuation of Judaism, nor a modication of that system. Judaism remains intact and follows its predicted course, according to Scripture, to the end. The new revelation of "the grace of God which hath appeared," and which is made possible only by the cross, should not be

colored by the Judaic teaching. It is a complete system in itself and, like Judaism, continues intact to its predicted end. For what else is Paul contending in Galatians if it is not that these two distinct systems shall not be mixed? And yet to what seeming avail are those pleadings to law-ridden, Judaized Protestantism to-day?

The second revelation came, in the main, from Paul's two years of imprisonment. This body of truth embraces the plan of the ages, the whole doctrine of the Church and the present out-calling of a heavenly body and bride as recorded in the Ephesian and Colossian letters. It is this advance body of truth which is never comprehended apart from the exact lines of distinctions laid down in kingdom revelations.

Theology, as usually presented, is disproportionately concerned with the Arabian revelation and a grave harm is done when such theology, creeds or catechisms, built largely on one aspect of New Testament teaching, are supposed to be adequate interpretations of the whole divine revelation. The theological student who enters his ministry with such presuppositions and limitations, inaccurate in many of his conceptions and prejudiced toward whole bodies of truth about which he knows little, will be incompetent to minister the whole Word.

An illustration of this may be drawn from 1 Tim. iv. 1–6. It is set forth here that the young Timothy may win the high title of "a good minister of Jesus Christ," if he is faithful in putting the

brethren in remembrance of the awful apostasy with which the present age must end (see also 2 Thess. ii. 1–10). How shall any minister discern an age-closing apostasy with its divinely ordered relations to the final triumph of God in the earth if he does not know these exact revelations which form the whole program of the kingdom according to Scripture?

No minister, therefore, can "preach the Word" in its right proportions, or be a "good minister of Jesus Christ" who habitually ignores the great prophetic themes. Nor is he excused in his neglect, or prejudice, by virtue of the fact that he represents a majority, or that other ideals have been set before him by his teachers. What is the particular knowledge that gives proficiency to the minister of Christ if it is not a thorough understanding of the Scriptures? Successful men of other professions apply themselves continually to the acquirement of accurate knowledge covering every phase of their chosen calling. Are these the accepted standards of the ministerial profession? Would we choose to be operated on by a physician who knows no more of surgery than the average theological student knows about prophecy? Yet the knowledge of prophecy, in its main features, is distinctly a part, and a very large and qualifying part, of the material committed to those who are called to "preach the Word."

2. Knowledge of prophetic truth qualifies all intelligent Christian life and service.

The careful student who distinguishes the various

purposes of God in the ages has discovered that there is a distinct rule of life and program for service in the present age which can never, reasonably, be confused with that which has gone before, or that which is to follow. It is a serious mistake to press law-observance in the face of repeated revelations that the believer of this age is not under law as his rule of life (Rom. vi. 14; x. 4, 5; Gal. v. 18; 2 Cor. iii. 11, 17). So also it will be found that, at present, service is the accomplishment of divine undertakings never before revealed, and its motives are alone the mighty governing principles of grace. A real zeal in service will result and a beginning of interest in Bible study will develop when these plain distinctions are carefully taught and observed.

3. Kingdom and prophetic truths are being falsely represented.

The country is being swept by "Russellism" (so-called "Millennial Dawn," "International Bible Students' League," etc.), and the appalling progress of this system which so misrepresents the whole revelation of God can only be accounted for in the unsatisfied hunger of the people for the prophetic portions of Scripture. Such a false system, mixing truth with untruth, and designed to interpret all of the divine revelation, is evidently more engaging to the popular mind than only the Scriptural presentation of the fundamental doctrines concerning God, Man and Redemption. Satan's lies are al-

ways garnished with truth and how much more attractive they seem to be when that garnishing is a neglected truth! And insurance against the encroachment of such false teaching lies only in correctly presenting the whole body of truth rather than in treating any portion of it as impractical or dangerous. No minister need greatly fear any false system when he is intelligently and constantly feeding the people on the Word in all its symmetry and due proportions. This is not only true concerning the teachings of "Millennial Dawn," but is equally true of the teachings of "Christian Science," "New Thought," "Spiritism," "Seventh Day Adventism" and all unscriptural doctrines of Sanctification.

4. Unfulfilled prophecy is as credible as history.

No one will question that faith is taxed in the study of prophecy more than in the study of history. It is not difficult to believe what has assuredly taken place: it is quite another thing to believe confidently that unprecedented events will occur when based only on the bare predictions of Scripture. This failure in faith doubtless underlies much neglect of the prophetic Scriptures and accounts for a prevalent habit of allegorizing and qualifying prophecy until it is reduced to the limitation of a human opinion. Under this pressure men otherwise clear on the interpretation of the Bible have gone so far as to assert that what Paul wrote in his early ministry was abandoned or

qualified in his later ministry. Revelation requires no such surgery. Such efforts reveal a state of mind which finds it easier to diminish Biblical authority than to increase personal confidence in the accuracy of Scripture. The mighty revelations of the purpose of God cannot be apprehended until the issue of believing His Word has been faithfully met.

5. Prophetic language is equally as accurate as other Scriptures.

While some prophecy is couched in symbolic language, those portions which trace the forward movements of the kingdom in the earth are largely free from problems presented by such symbolism, and that body of truth appears in language and terms the meaning of which cannot reasonably be questioned. The pity is that Origen ever conceived the allegorizing method of interpretation, and that his misleading and violent liberty with the text has since found such fertile soil in which to propagate.

A mixture of the teachings concerning Israel, as a nation, with the revelations concerning the Church, the body of Christ, is groundless in Scripture. It is hopelessly confusing and grotesque, for under this plan only Israel's blessings are borrowed; her curses and penalties are, naturally, not wanted. No progress can be made in the kingdom studies unless plain words are taken in their obviously plain meaning. In the Bible "Israel" is not the "Church"; "Zion" is not the body of saints of

this dispensation; the "throne of David" is not Heaven, nor will it ever be; the "land of your fathers" is not "Paradise" and the "house of Jacob" is not a host of Gentiles ignorantly attempting to force an entrance into Judaism. All such borrowed habits of interpretation must be faithfully judged and abandoned if ever the kingdom portions of God's Word are to assume any order or meaning.

6. Scripture must be rightly divided and applied.

It has been said "All Scripture is for us, but all Scripture is not about us." It all bears a message to us, but is not all our rule of life. It will not do for Gentile believers to read themselves into the great portion of the Bible which treats distinctly of a chosen nation, still a separate people in the earth, under the special unbroken purpose of God and exactly where God intended them to be at this very hour.

So with Christ: He was "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. xv. 8). This describes a strictly Jewish mission and purpose. He was also the grounds of personal justification to the Gentile believers (1 Cor. i. 3–8; 2 Cor. v. 21); but the two are separate. Because He was great enough to fulfill the predicted requirements for both Jew and Gentile is no warrant for Gentiles to attempt to intrude into those divine

ministrations which were evidently only for the Jews. A right division and application of Scripture demands that a portion of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus be recognized as belonging to the divine covenants with one nation in which Gentiles have no part (Eph. ii. 11, 12). During these ministrations Gentiles were not in view (Mt. x. 5) nor can they be made to so appear by any fair method of interpretation.

7. There can be but one true system of interpretation.

It is for the faithful student to discover this for himself. Accepted inferences of so-called Postmillennialism and Premillennialism as possible coexisting systems of interpretation constitute a serious challenge against the dignity and purpose of the Bible itself. Either the divine revelation follows a definite order in the development of the kingdom in the earth, or it does not. If it does, there could hardly be two distinct programs coexisting in the mind and purpose of God. If there is but one order, an individual who confessedly knows nothing of the kingdom body of truth falls far short of being an approved workman, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, when he, through prejudice or preconceived conclusions, is not willing to be moved and molded by the exact and accurate words of revelation. And how much greater is his failure when guilty of withholding these mighty transforming themes from others!

II

THE KINGDOM COVENANTED

THE Bible teaches that God will ultimately triumph over all sin and rebellion in the earth. This is stated in many passages; notably 1 Cor. xv. 24–28: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

Thus does the divine record predict the restoration of this universe to its primal blessedness under the unchallenged authority of God, when the Son shall have put down all authority and banished every foe. This purpose, as recorded in the Bible, appears in various stages, or aspects, all leading with the certainty of the Infinite to the glorious consummation.

The reëstablishment of the authority of God is first mentioned in Gen. iii. 15, where it is stated that the Seed of the woman should bruise the head of Satan, the file leader of all the permitted present confusion in the government of God. In this mighty undertaking, too, Satan must bruise his heel. There are successive methods and various degrees of divine government in the earth following this first reference in Genesis and leading up to the eternal kingdom covenant made with David. In the Davidic Covenant the final consummation is again foreseen in that this covenant is unlimited in respect to time. It is the detail and duration of this covenant that gives it preëminent value as the logical starting-point for all kingdom study in the Scriptures.

The portion of the Davidic Covenant which has to do with eternal rule and government is as follows: "Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be es-

tablished for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (2 Sam. vii. 11–17).

This covenant, as herein stated, secures an established kingly order which will continue for ever. The element of perpetuity in this kingly rule was not conditioned in Jehovah's oath by sin in the Davidic house. Chastisement was provided in case of disobedience,—chastisement which fell upon the nation in the captivities and the dispersion,—but the eternal purpose of the covenant is not abrogated: "Thy throne shall be established for ever."

Of this eternal covenant and the one condition of chastisement it is written in Ps. lxxxix. 20–37: "I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: with whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my

statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." The certainty of this covenant is again stated in Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21: "Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne."

Peter, by the Spirit, in his pentecostal sermon reveals also that it was the eternal element in this covenant, to which Jehovah had sworn with an oath, that led David to foresee the Lord always before his face and to demand in his faith, even the resurrection of Christ, that the oath of his God should not fail. Thus Peter spoke of David: "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer

thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life: thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption" (Acts ii. 25–31).

So, yet again, when the reign of peace through David's Greater Son is pictured to the House of Jacob, over whom he is to rule, the same eternal covenant is mentioned with a chastisement: "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment," which moment, however, has already extended at least twenty-four centuries; but what is this compared with that which follows: "But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer" (Isa. liv. 8)?

The history of the kings from David on, with the sin of the nation, is too familiar to need description. Their complete apostasy ended in chastisement in which they were taken off from the land and scattered among the nations and there was a cessation of the line of kings. These exact events Moses had prophesied a full thousand years before. This prophecy forms a part of the farewell

address of Moses to the nation for whom he had wrought, and with whom, because of the judgments of Jehovah, he could not enter the land. Moses foresaw the national apostasy, the chastisement by exile, and on beyond a period already extended 3,500 years, to that nation's blessings which are yet future, when their chastisement shall have ended and they are regathered into their own land under the unchanging covenant of Jehovah. These prophecies are recorded in Deut. xxvi. 1 to xxx. 20. Only a portion is here given: "And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you" (Deut. xxviii. 63–68). "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and

do all his commandments which I command thee this day. And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every good work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over your fathers: If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul" (Deut. xxx. 1–10).

There is no more important Scripture relating to Israel than this, and every word of this prophecy covering the time to the present hour has been literally fulfilled. Shall it not be so to the end? Shall they not be regathered as actually as they have been scattered? And that in relation to, and by virtue of, a "return," or second coming (xxx. 3) of the divine Person to the earth? Is there any other explanation of the miraculous preservation of that nation than that Jehovah's oath cannot be broken?

III

THE KINGDOM PROPHESIED

IT is significant that the Old Testament prophets spoke, in the main, in one comparatively brief period. This was the time in which Israel was approaching and entering her national dispersion under the chastening hand of God. It was in the darkest hour of their history that these seers, as by contrast, set forth the unprecedented light of the nation's coming glory. This consensus of prophetic vision has never had a semblance of fulfillment; yet the nation is still divinely preserved, and that, evidently, with this consummation in view (Jer. xxxi. 35–37; Mt. xxiv. 31–34).

Some of the prophets spoke before the exile, some during the exile, while others spoke after a remnant, but not the nation, had returned to their land. While they spoke with individual purpose and style, they were united as one voice on certain great themes. They condemned the nation's sin and predicted the coming chastisement. They saw the judgments about to fall upon the surrounding nations; but these Gentile judgments are in view only as they are related to Israel. Above all they saw their own future blessings, the form and manner of which are too accurately described by them

to be misunderstood. Their prophecies expanded into magnificent detail the covenanted reign of David's Son over the House of Jacob for ever.

In tracing these passages scarcely a comment is necessary if the statements are taken in their plain and obvious meaning. Passages are here selected from the many that were spoken by all the prophets concerning the coming King and His kingdom, and from these Scriptures it will be seen that:

1. Immanuel's kingdom will be theocratic.

The King will be (*a*) "Immanuel, God with us"; (*b*) by human birth a rightful heir to David's throne; (*c*) born of a virgin in Bethlehem.

(*a*) The King will be "Immanuel, God with us": "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. vii. 14). "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Mt. i. 22, 23).

(*b*) The King will be heir to David's throne: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make him of quick

understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" (Isa. xi. 1–5). "Behold, the day is come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Jer. xxiii. 5). "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd" (Ezk. xxxiv. 23). "And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them" (Ezk. xxxvii. 24). "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim; afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days" (Hos. iii. 4, 5).

(*c*) The King was to be born of a virgin in Bethlehem: "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"

(Isa. vii. 14). "But, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting" (Mich. v. 2).

2. Immanuel's kingdom will be heavenly in character.

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. ii. 4). "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" (Isa. xi. 4, 5). "Behold, the day is come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, I will cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness. For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of

the house of Israel" (Jer. xxxiii. 14–17). "And in that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely" (Hos. ii. 18).

3. Immanuel's kingdom will be (*a*) *in the earth;* (*b*) *centered at Jerusalem;* (*c*) *over regathered and converted Israel;* (*d*) *and extending to the nations.*

(*a*) Immanuel's kingdom will be in the earth: "Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the *earth* for thy possession" (Ps. ii. 8). "For the *earth* shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. xi. 9). "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the *earth:* and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isa. xlii. 4). "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the *earth*" (Jer. xxiii. 5). "And the LORD shall be king over all the *earth:* in that day there shall be one LORD, and his name one" (Zech. xiv. 9).

(*b*) Immanuel's kingdom will be centered at Jerusalem: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of

the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isa. ii. 1–3). "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isa. lxii. 1–7). "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of

many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. viii. 20–23). "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk. xxi. 24).

(*c*) Immanuel's kingdom will be over regathered and converted Israel: "That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: and the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" (Deut. xxx. 3–6). "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand the sec-

ond time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. xi. 11, 12). "For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors" (Isa. xiv. 1–3; see also lx. 1–22). "In his day Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them: and they shall dwell in their own land" (Jer. xxiii. 6–8). "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in my anger, and in my fury, and in great

wrath; and I will bring them again into this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God" (Jer. xxxii. 37, 38). "And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby, they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it" (Jer. xxxiii. 7–9; see also Ezk. xxxvi. 16–38). "And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: But I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all

shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever" (Ezk. xxxvii. 21–25). "In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halteth a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever. And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong-hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem" (Mich. iv. 6–8).

(*d*) Immanuel's kingdom shall extend to the nations in the earth: "Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed" (Ps. lxxii. 11, 17). "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name" (Ps. lxxxvi. 9). "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee"

(Isa. lv. 5). "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. vii. 13, 14). 'And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Mich. iv. 2). "Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD" (Zech. viii. 22). "And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God" (Amos ix. 15).

4. Immanuel's kingdom will be established by the power of the returning King.

"That then the LORD will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee" (Deut. xxx. 3). "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to

the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Ps. l. 3–5). "For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth" (Ps. xcvi. 13). "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD, and many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation" (Zech. ii. 10–12). "BEHOLD, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years" (Mal. iii. 1–4).

5. Immanuel's kingdom will be spiritual.

Not incorporal, or separate from that which is material ; but spiritual in that the will of God will be directly effective in all matters of government and conduct. The joy and blessedness of fellowship with God will be experienced by all. The political, temporal kingdom will be conducted in perfect righteousness and true holiness. The kingdom of God will again be "in the midst" (Lk. xvii. 21) in the Person of the Messiah King and He will rule in the grace and power of the sevenfold Spirit (Isa. xi. 2, 3). Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and the nations shall walk in the light of God. " Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD." The trees of the field shall clap their hands for joy.

These passages, which might be multiplied many times, may serve to outline the prophet's vision of the features of Messiah's earthly kingdom which was covenanted to David. This kingdom has ever been Israel's only hope and was the consolation for which she waited when Christ was born (Lk. ii. 25).

IV

THE KINGDOM OFFERED

IN subject matter the division between the Old Testament and the New occurs at the cross of Christ, rather than between Malachi and Matthew. The Gospels, in the main, carry forward the same dispensational conditions that were in effect at the hour when Christ was born. Especially is this true of the Gospel of Matthew, Christ being set forth in that Gospel, first of all, as a King with His kingdom in full view. The Spirit has faithfully selected those deeds and teachings of Christ from the complete manifestation in the flesh which portray Him in the dominant character reflected in each Gospel. In Matthew He is presented as the King; in Mark as Jehovah's servant; in Luke as the perfect human; and in John as the very Son of God. In all these narratives, this one Person is seen acting and teaching under the same conditions which existed for centuries before the cross. There is some anticipation of what would follow the cross as there is reference after the cross to what had gone before. Whatever preceded the cross, in the main, fell under those conditions and colorings of "the law which came by Moses," and Jesus not only held up Moses as the authority for the time, but also expanded his teachings. A great division

between the Old Testament and the New, therefore, lies in the fact that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and became effective with the cross of Christ rather than with His birth.

Matthew opens with an emphasis upon Christ as the Son of David: "The book of the generation (genea, nationality or line of descent, cf. Mt. xxiv. 34) of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." Although, in this Gospel, Jesus is presented as the "Son of Abraham" in sacrificial death, the primary purpose of the writer is to set forth the nation's King. This being the only office that is ever assigned to a "Son of David." The tracing of the divinely appointed kingdom thus proceeds from the Old Testament into the New without a change other than the appearance of the long expected King, accompanied by His forerunner, whose predicted ministry had occupied the closing words of the Old Testament revelation. There is no break in the narrative.

The fact that Jesus was David's Greater Son, the fulfiller of all the nation's kingdom blessings is not based on human opinion. It was announced by the angel Gabriel before the birth of Christ as recorded in Luke i. 31–33: "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

This treats distinctly of the "Throne of David" over the "House of Jacob," and proclaims of this kingdom that "there shall be no end." No Gentile blessings are in view here; nor need the Gentiles seek to intrude. Gentile blessings will eventually flow out of this very throne; but these are not in view, nor are any Gentile blessings endangered by a faithful recognition of this distinctly Jewish purpose. The same is clearly stated in Rom. xv. 8: "Now this I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision (Israel) for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." He did not come to *annul* those promises; but He did come to *confirm* them. The promises made unto the fathers are well defined: no promises were made to Gentiles. The term "the fathers" can mean none other than God's chosen men of Israel. By these promises Israel was to be redeemed and placed in her own land and that by Immanuel who should be the final Prophet, Priest and King. He should be her King over her covenanted kingdom. These promises made unto the fathers were the nation's only hope, as is clearly indicated: "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom unto Israel?"

In Christ, then, the kingdom covenant made to David had its confirmation as well, it being one of the promises made unto the fathers. How certainly that covenant must stand to-day!

It is recorded of Jesus that He was "born King

of the Jews" (Mt. ii. 2). To this throne He made final claim at His trial (Mt. xxvii. 11). And under this accusation He suffered (Mt. xxvii. 29) and died (Mt. xxvii. 37). One needs only to search the Scriptures to discover the fact that He is never mentioned as King of the church, nor King of the nations until He comes again as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Rev. xix. 16). He fulfilled every prediction that described Israel's Messiah King and the manner of His coming, at a time when all the records and genealogies were intact. He came of the tribe of Judah, a Son of David, born of a virgin in Bethlehem of Judea. Such claims could not then be made by an impostor without arousing the violent opposition of the rulers of the nation. His claim to be King was never challenged, so far as title was concerned. He met every prediction concerning Israel's Immanuel King. He was that King.

Four centuries before the birth of Jesus Malachi had prophesied the coming of a forerunner to the King: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. iv. 5, 6). This had a certain fulfillment in John the Baptist according, again, to angelic testimony: "But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou

shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk. i. 13–17). Thus also another Messianic claim was met in the faithful ministry of John.

The first message of this divinely foreseen witness is recorded thus: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. iii. 1, 2). This, too, was the first message recorded of Christ: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. iv. 17). So, again, it was the only message committed to His disciples when He first sent them forth to preach: "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. x. 5–7). This message, it will be seen, had no application to Gentiles: The messengers were to go "only to the lost sheep of

the house of Israel." It can scarcely be unnoticed that while every detail of the manner of their journey was subject to the most careful instruction by the King, there is no record of instruction having been given them as to the meaning of this first, or kingdom, message committed to them. Evidently they did not need such instruction concerning the kingdom. Had not the kingdom hope been passed from father to son for generations? Had it not been sung to them at their mother's knee? Had it not been the one great theme of the synagogue instruction? Was it not their national hope? How much in contrast to this was the prolonged inability on the part of these same disciples to grasp, later on, the new message and world-wide commission of the cross!

This focusing of the testimony of Jesus, of John and of the disciples upon one solitary message, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," places that message under unusual emphasis and its actual meaning should be carefully considered.

The phrase "The kingdom of heaven" is found only in Matthew, the Gospel of the King, and there it appears with different shades of meaning. One only of these shades of meaning is used in Chapters i. to xii. of this Gospel. Here it seems to refer to the same earthly Davidic kingdom with which the Old Testament had closed. As has been stated, whatever was meant by this announcement of the "kingdom of heaven," it was clearly understood by the preachers who proclaimed it and by the hearers.

No other kingdom message could have thus been received by those people in that day. So, also, it was addressed to one nation, Israel, and to them as a whole, rather than to individuals. Thus the "kingdom of heaven" as a message must ever be distinguished from the message of the gospel of grace which came by the cross. The gospel of grace Israel, as a nation, has never understood, and it is addressed to all peoples and to them as individuals only. The message of the "kingdom of heaven" as first set forth by Matthew had, therefore, a limited and national meaning,—limited as to time of its application, because a new message has come in; and national, because, for the time being, it was addressed to Israel alone.

The message of the "kingdom of heaven" did not concern itself so much with the Person of the King as it did with His kingdom. But Israel had never dreamed of a kingdom apart from the presence and power of the expected King. Thus Jesus could say of Himself, in the light of the accepted close relation between the Person of the King and His kingdom: "The kingdom of God is within you" ("in the midst," in the Person of the King, Lk. xvii. 21). To assert the imminency of the kingdom was, to them, to assert the imminency of the King.

This kingdom message conforms in another respect, also, to the conditions of the Old Testament kingdom. There must be a great national heart-turning, or repentance to God as an imme-

diate preparation for the kingdom as seen in the Old Testament (Deut. xxx. 1–3; Isa. xxiv. 7; Hos. iii. 4, 5; xiv. 7; Zech. xii. 10–xiii. 1; Mal. iii. 7). Repentance, therefore, became an imperative part of the message concerning the imminency of the kingdom. So each of these kingdom messengers called upon that nation to repent: "A generation of vipers" must "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." They must turn about in heart as a condition of this covenanted kingdom blessing. This they, by His grace, are yet to do, "in His time." It is to be regretted that this required national repentance of Israel has been so often misapplied as a necessary preliminary step in an individual's salvation by Grace.

As certainly as the message of the "kingdom of heaven" was a claim upon the nation's hope, so, also, the rule of life presented in connection with this claim by both John the Baptist and Christ was in harmony with the Old Testament kingdom rule of life. The kingdom as foreseen in the Old Testament had ever in view the righteousness in life and conduct of its subjects (Isa. xi. 3–5; xxxii. 1; Jer. xxiii. 6; Dan. ix. 24). The "kingdom of heaven" as announced and offered in the early part of Matthew's Gospel is also accompanied with positive demands for personal righteousness in life and conduct. This is not the principle of grace: it is rather the principle of law. It extends into finer detail the law of Moses; but it never ceases to be the very opposite of the principle of grace. Law

conditions its blessings on human works: Grace conditions its works on divine blessings. Law says: "If ye forgive, ye will be forgiven," and in that measure only (Mt. vi. 14, 15): while grace says: "Forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake *hath* forgiven you" (Eph. iv. 32). So, again, law says: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. v. 20). This is not a present condition for entrance into heaven. Present conditions are wholly based on mercy: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saves us" (Tit. iii. 5). So the preaching of John the Baptist, like the Sermon on the Mount, was on a law basis as indicated by its appeal which was only for a correct and righteous life: "Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the roots of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came

also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages" (Lk. iii. 7–14). This, like the Sermon on the Mount, is an appeal for a righteous life and cannot be confused with the present terms of salvation without nullifying the grounds of every hope and promise under grace. The present appeal to the unsaved is not for better conduct: it is for personal belief in, and acceptance of, the Saviour. There are directions concerning the conduct of those who are saved by trust in the Saviour; but these cannot be mixed with the law conditions of the Old Testament, or the New, without peril to souls. Later on the same people said to Christ: "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" and to this He replied: "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (Jno. vi. 28, 29). John the Baptist looked forward to the blessings of grace when he said: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"; but his immediate demands were in conformity with pure law, as were the early teachings of Jesus. Thus the legal principles of conduct of the Old Testament kingdom are carried forward into the revelations of the same kingdom as it appears in the New Testament.

The right division of Scripture does not destroy these legal passages; but it does fully classify them with the other Scriptures relating to the kingdom, both in the Old Testament and the New. There are many elements found in this body of truth that indicate the required manner of life in the kingdom which will be found likewise under the consistent walk in grace; but whatever is carried forward to be a life-governing principle under grace is there restated in its own place and with its own new emphasis. Thus the two widely differing systems are meant to be kept distinct in the mind of the faithful student of God's Word.

It should be borne in mind that the legal kingdom requirements as stated in the Sermon on the Mount are meant to prepare the way for, and condition life in, the earthly Davidic kingdom when it shall be set up upon the earth, and at that time when the kingdom prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in *earth*, as it is in heaven," has been answered. These kingdom conditions appear in the early ministry of Jesus since He was at that time faithfully offering the Messianic kingdom to Israel.

It has been objected that such stipulations as "resist not evil"; "if one shall smite you on the one cheek"; "one shall compel you to go a mile"; and "persecutions for righteousness' sake," could not be possible in the kingdom. This challenge may be based upon a supposition that the earthly Messianic kingdom is to be as morally perfect as

heaven. On the contrary, the Scriptures abundantly testify that, while there will be far less occasion to sin, for the sufficient reason that Satan is then bound and in a pit and the glorious King is on His throne, there will be need of immediate execution of judgment and justice in the earth, and even the King shall rule, of necessity, with a "rod of iron." It is said that "all Israel shall be saved" and "all shall know the Lord from the least even unto the greatest"; but it is also revealed that at the end of that millennium, when Satan is loosed for a little season, he is still able to solicit the allegiance of human hearts and to draw out of the multitudes within the kingdom an army for rebellion against the government of the King (Rev. xx. 7–9). In that kingdom age "a sinner being an hundred years old shall be cursed" (Isa. lxv. 20). The saints of that age will doubtless have heaven before their eyes and be looking there for their reward. And they will be the "salt of the earth."

These kingdom commands and principles were given to Israel only and it is that same distinct nation that shall stand first in that kingdom when it is set up in the earth. Jesus was first "a minister to the circumcision," and is it an unnatural interpretation of Scripture to understand that He was performing this divinely appointed ministry at that very time when He was offering the kingdom to that nation and when He, with His forerunner, was depicting the principles of conduct that should

condition life in that kingdom? Nothing is lost by such an interpretation; on the contrary, everything is gained, for the riches of grace, which, alas, so few apprehend, are thus kept pure and free from an unscriptural mixture with the kingdom law.

It may be concluded that the term "kingdom of heaven" as used in the early ministry of Jesus referred to the Messianic, Davidic, earthly kingdom seen in the Old Testament. As has been noted, the Jewish preachers needed no instruction in the details of that message. It was the hope of their nation, and it was addressed to that nation alone. So, also, an appeal was made with this message for the anticipated national repentance which must precede the setting up of their kingdom in the earth, and the requirements set forth were legal rather than gracious. Israel's kingdom was faithfully offered to them by their King at His first appearing.

V

THE KINGDOM REJECTED AND POSTPONED

THE fact that the other Gospels present certain revelations as related to the kingdom of God which Matthew has related to the kingdom of heaven has been accepted by some as grounds for concluding that these terms are synonymous. There can be no question that there is much in common between whatever may be represented by these two terms, else they would not be used interchangeably. The common ground between them lies, it would seem, in the fact that both refer to a certain divine authority, or government. A study of the passages involved will reveal that there is a wide difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. This will be seen to be in the extent of government which is implied in each. The term "kingdom of God," it will be found, is employed when there is nothing stated that would limit its authority over all the universe. The term "kingdom of heaven," it will also be found, is used when the divine government is considered as limited to the earth. There is an important difference, as well, in the possible moral character of each. It is not said of the kingdom of God, as it is of the kingdom of heaven, that

there are divine judgments required for wrong-doers within its bounds, or that the false wheat, or tares, and bad fish are a part of it. Entrance into the kingdom of heaven, in its Messianic form, may be by so low a standard as that which merely exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees (Mt. v. 20): while entrance into the kingdom of God is by a new birth alone (Jno. iii. 3). The kingdom of heaven is the divine government in the earth which passes through changing phases until every foe has been conquered, and it is finally merged, perfected, into the all-inclusive kingdom of God (1 Cor. xv. 24–28). For this final consummation we plead when we pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Whatever within this divine government in the earth is consonant with the perfect character of the kingdom of God may be considered as a part of that kingdom; though some of its subjects, who are perfect in standing, may be quite imperfect in life and conduct.

The kingdom of heaven has been defined by Rev. C. I. Scofield, D. D., in the Scofield Reference Bible thus:

(1) "The phrase, kingdom of heaven (lit. of the heavens), is peculiar to Matthew and signifies the Messianic earth rule of Jesus Christ, the Son of David. It is called the kingdom of heaven because it is the rule of the heavens over the earth (Mt. vi. 10). The phrase is derived from Daniel, where it is defined (Dan. ii. 34–36, 44; vii. 23–27) as the

kingdom which 'the God of heaven' will set up after the destruction by the 'stone cut out without hands' of the Gentile world-system. It is the kingdom covenanted to David's seed (2 Sam. vii. 7–10); described in the prophets (Zech. xii. 8, note); and confirmed to Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary, through the angel Gabriel (Lk. i. 32, 33).

(2) "The kingdom of heaven has three aspects in Matthew: (*a*) 'at hand' from the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist (Mt. iii. 2) to the virtual rejection of the King, and the announcement of the new brotherhood (Mt. xii. 46–50); (*b*) In seven 'mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,' to be fulfilled during the present age (Mt. xiii. 1–52), to which are to be added the parables of the kingdom of heaven which were spoken after those of Matthew xiii., and which have to do with the sphere of Christian profession during this age; (*c*) The prophetic aspect—the kingdom to be set up after the return of the King in glory (Mt. xxiv. 29–xxv. 46; Lk. xix. 12–19; Acts xv. 14–17)."—*Scofield Reference Bible, page 996.*

So, again:

"The kingdom of God is to be distinguished from the kingdom of heaven (Mt. iii. 2, note) in five respects: (1) The kingdom of God is universal, including all moral intelligence willingly subject to the will of God, whether angels, the Church, or saints of past or future dispensations (Lk. xiii. 28, 29; Heb. xii. 22, 23); while the kingdom of heaven is Messianic, Mediatorial, Davidic, and has for its object the establishment of the kingdom of God in the earth (Mt. iii. 2, note; 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25). (2) The

kingdom of God is entered only by the new birth (Jno. iii. 3, 5–7); the kingdom of heaven, during this age, is the sphere of a profession which may be real or false (Mt. xiii. 3, note; xxv. 1, 11, 12). (3) Since the kingdom of heaven is the earthly sphere of the universal kingdom of God, the two have almost all things in common. For this reason many parables and other teachings are spoken of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew, and of the kingdom of God in Mark and Luke. It is the omissions which are significant. The parables of the wheat and tares, and of the net (Mt. xiii. 24–30, 36–43, 47–50) are not spoken of the kingdom of God. In that kingdom there are neither tares nor bad fish. But the parable of the leaven (Mt. xiii. 33) is spoken of the kingdom of God also, for, alas, even the true doctrines of the kingdom are leavened with the errors of which the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians were the representatives. (See Mt. xiii. 33, note.) (4) The kingdom of God 'comes not with outward show' (Lk. xvii. 20), but is chiefly that which is inward and spiritual (Rom. xiv. 17); while the kingdom of heaven is organic, and is to be manifested in glory on the earth. . . . (5) The kingdom of heaven merges into the kingdom of God when Christ, having 'put all enemies under His feet,' 'shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father' (1 Cor. xv. 24–28)."—*Ibid., page 1003.*

The various uses of the term kingdom of heaven in Matthew's Gospel represent the progressive stages through which the government of God in the earth must pass in arriving at the determined end. The first use of the term is in connection

with the offer of a kingdom to Israel which had been covenanted to David and described by the prophets of the Old Testament and that which forms the hope of Israel to this hour. This offer of the kingdom which was extended through Christ, John, and the disciples to the nation was rejected by that nation, notwithstanding the fact that it was in complete fulfillment of every divinely given prediction. It was a bona fide offer and, had they received Him as their King, the nation's hope would have been realized. However, it was in the perfect councils and foreknowledge of God that the offer would be rejected, and thereby the way was made for the realization of the great unrevealed purpose of God, which was to be accomplished before the final manifestation of the kingdom in the earth.

This first offer of the kingdom had been typified by the events at Kadish-Barnea. There this same nation, which had already tasted the discomforts of the desert, were given an opportunity to immediately enter their promised land. Thus left to choose, they failed to enter, and returned to forty years more of wilderness wandering and added judgments. They might have entered the land in blessing. God knew they would not; still it was through their own choice that the blessing was postponed. Later they were brought again to the land after their judgments and afflictions in the wilderness. This time, however, it was without reference to their own choice. With the high

hand of Jehovah God they were placed in their own land. So Israel, already five hundred years out of the land, and without a king, rejected the King and the kingdom as offered in Christ, and still continues the wilderness afflictions among all the nations of the earth whither the Lord God hath driven them. But He will yet regather them, else the oath of Jehovah will fail, and that regathering will be without reference to their own choosing, or merit. Under an unconditional covenant He has pledged to place them in kingdom blessings, under the glorious reign of their Immanuel King and in their own land (Deut. xxx. 3–5; Isa. xi. 10–13; Jer. xxiii. 3–8; Ezk. xxxvii. 21–25). This, too, shall be done by no human processes, but by the mighty power of God.

The first evidence of Israel's rejection of her kingdom as offered by her King is seen in the record that John the Baptist had been placed in prison (Mt. xi. 2). What could the imprisonment of the forerunner mean other than a step toward the rejection of the King? Immediately the King utters His first words of judgment and doom: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judg-

ment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Mt. xi. 20–24). Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum were the cities in which He had given greatest proof of His Messiahship and they were therefore most guilty in His rejection.

In connection with this first evidence of rejection there is introduced a note wholly foreign to the kingdom theme, and with great significance: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. xi. 28, 29). Everything is in contrast: this is not an offer of a kingdom to a nation, but of soul rest to the individual who will come to Him. A rest which results from coming to know the Father through the Son (Mt. xi. 27), whom to know aright is eternal life (Jno. xvii. 3). The reality contained in this offer could only be realized by His cross. Christ was evidently associating, even then, His rejection with His cross. It was as though He was comforting His own heart with a moment's reflection upon the "joy that was set before him" for which He would "endure the cross and despise the shame." Who shall measure the joy of His heart in bringing rest to one sin-sick soul (Isa. liii. 11)? This flash-light on the coming redemption by His cross immediately

passes and the King continues to present Himself to the nation as their King. He proves again by the mighty works of the following chapter that He is none other than their long looked for Messiah; yet in the midst of these infallible proofs it is recorded: "And the Pharisees went out and held a council how they might destroy him" (Mt. xii. 14). The death of John the Baptist (Mt. xiv. 1–13) is also followed by a rebuke to the Pharisees and by words of judgment upon them (Mt. xv. 1–20).

Another glance forward toward His cross is recorded in connection with His evident rejection in Mt. xvi. 13–18: "When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The rejection is seen in the report of the disciples that Christ was accounted for by the men of the nation to whom He had come as being John the Baptist, Elias, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

How impressed they were with His Personality and power! Yet how preposterous that He should be confused with John with whom He had so recently stood among them! They were evidently willing to account for Him by any subterfuge that would relieve them of the acknowledgment of Him as their King. In connection with this new evidence of rejection He again reflects upon the joy that was to be His through His cross: "On this rock I will build my church." The church, His precious bride, which He loved and for which He gave Himself; "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25–27). This, again, is the joy that was set before Him and which would be realized only by His rejection and sacrificial death.

Continuing the narrative of the Gospel of the King to its end, He is seen still offering Himself to the nation as their King, riding meek and lowly into Jerusalem that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, and dying under the fatal and final claim to be the "King of the Jews." Along with this is the record of the ever increasing animosity and rejection of the nation, leading up to the climacteric expression of their hatred, the crucifixion of their King between two thieves. Thus the supreme wickedness of man descended to its lowest depths of sin against God; yet by this death the flood-gates

of life were opened and the very sin of His crucifixion was laid back upon His own breast, as He met all the doom that must fall upon "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

When the nation began to reject her King, He not only began to anticipate His sacrificial death and the blessings to flow out of it, but He began, also, to speak of returning to this earth again, and to associate the realization of His earthly kingdom with that event. That the kingdom was to be realized through a return of the divine Person was certainly in the foreknowledge of God and was foretold by prophets (Deut. xxx. 3 ; Dan. vii. 13, 14). However, in the main, the prophets did not distinguish the fulfilling of the Lamb, or sacrificial type, in the first advent from the fulfilling of the Lion, or kingly type, in the second advent. On the other hand, by the Spirit, who inspired them, they never confused these great issues, although the time relations that were to exist between these two vastly different ministries of Christ were not revealed to them. Of this Peter writes in 1 Pet. i. 10, 11 thus: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The unsolved problem was the time intervening between the sufferings of Christ in connection with His first coming,

and His manifestation in glory when He should come the second time.

To conclude that these literal earthly blessings for Israel were transferred into spiritual blessings for all nations because Israel rejected and crucified her King at His first appearing, compels one to ignore the bulk of Old Testament prophecies and the plain promises and teachings of Jesus. The oath of Jehovah still stands, and He knows no defeat. His plan has not been changed. To speak of the kingdom as postponed is to consider it within the perspective of Israel's final glory. If the oath, covenant and promises of Jehovah cannot be trusted, what assurance can be drawn from any word He has spoken? Purposing to instruct us as to a yet future earthly kingdom for Israel, and for the nations through them, what more positive, or meaningful, language could He have employed?

CHAPTER VI

PRESENT TRUTH

AT least seven realities not seen by the Old Testament writers were brought into view and made possible through the cross. These, with all correlated truth, form the distinct revelation of "grace and truth" that "came by Jesus Christ" and "the New Testament in his blood." Peter writes of this body of Scripture as "present truth" (2 Pet. i. 12), doubtless from the fact that it sets forth the divine blessings and relationships which are obviously effective within the present age. These new unfoldings of "grace and truth," it will be seen, are in no way related to, or a part of, those earthly kingdom revelations which had been previously recorded by the sacred writers. Much is in contrast between these two bodies of truth; but it is even more important to see that a great difference lies in the fact that one treats of a celestial sphere of spiritual reality which is as much above the temporal, earthly covenants of the other as heaven is higher than the earth.

These new conditions flowing from, and made possible by, the cross are not a readjustment of defeated Old Testament purposes, or the merging of the old order into the new. What was purposed in the earthly kingdom is still following its own

divine order and development to its own mighty consummation. Its present form is exactly what God intended it to be at this hour, and all this will lead as certainly to the fulfillment of every predicted manifestation in the earth. Christianity is totally opposite to Judaism and any mixture of the two must result in the loss of all that is vital in the present plan of Salvation. One made its appeal to the limited resources of the natural man and conditioned his life on the earth: the other sets aside the natural man, secures a whole new creation in Christ Jesus, and counsels that new being in his pilgrim journey to his heavenly home. Israel's kingdom revelation, dealing with the past or present, does not gather into itself the distinct relationships that form the elements of "present truth," which are for this age only. On the other hand, the kingdom realization awaits the return of the King. The prolonged dispersion of Israel among the nations, with the divine preservation of that people, is not only clearly anticipated in Scripture (Hos. iii. 4, 5; Lk. xxi. 24; Rom. xi. 25; Acts xv. 13–18; Lk. xix. 11–13), but is one of the most evident facts of history. With the Gentile world opposing the Jew, at times bent upon their extermination, behold them now! Although comparatively few in number, they are rapidly rising to the place of command among the peoples of earth in finance, in the professions, in science and the fine arts. What this augurs to the devout student of Jewish prophecy is obvious.

The new issues, growing out of the cross, which confront the Bible student are:

1. Life from God through a new birth by the Spirit.

What relation to God was accorded to Old Testament saints is not clearly revealed. Doubtless they were individually renewed by the Spirit as they came to believe in God for their personal salvation. Whatever may have been the result of their spiritual change, they knew nothing of a new life and sonship as it is set forth in the New Testament. Nicodemus, than whom the nation could then produce no better, and representing the very highest product of the "Jew's religion," needed to be told that even he "must be born again." So foreign was this to his knowledge of truth that he could only reply: "How can these things be?" Paul, who had lived "in all good conscience" within the revelations of the nation's faith, must be transformed into a new creature on the Damascus road. After this he ceased not to pray for like members of his own nation who had a "zeal for God" that they, too, might be saved. One passage upon this point may be sufficient: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Where-

fore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. iv. 4–7).

The new life by the Spirit is presented in the Scriptures as the fundamental and distinguishing fact of the Christian. Upwards of a hundred New Testament passages emphasize this truth. In these passages a "new creation," or species, is said to be formed by the mighty creative power of God (Eph. ii. 10). This newly created one is not of this earth, but is a citizen of heaven (Phil. iii. 20). He is a legitimate son of God by a legitimate birth through the Spirit (Jno. iii. 6); possessing the divine nature (2 Pet. i. 4), which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. iii. 23). Being properly a son of God, he is said to be an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ (Rom. viii. 17; Gal. iv. 7).

God alone is sufficient for the miracles that together produce a Christian, and the reasonableness of the way of salvation is seen in that it must be received as a gift and on the basis of trusting Him for its accomplishment. This fact of regeneration is the only present issue between God and an unsaved person. When this is accomplished the obviously desirable reformation in life and conduct will be outwardly manifested by the new inwrought divine nature and power.

How short the vision is which can see no farther than to strive for the reformation of an individual in matters of purpose and conduct, as desirable as

such reformation may be, when the divine plan to produce a whole new being with its new heart, disposition and power is so plainly revealed! It is puerile to be obsessed with a by-product of the fact of eternal life. Certainly this is not an abstract issue: having passed from death unto life has been, and will be, the abiding miracle in the life of individuals of all generations from the cross of Christ until He comes again. As certainly, also, such efforts toward reformation cannot be justified from Scripture; for interpretations which would suggest conduct to be the primary issue between God and the unsaved cannot be found unless Israel's law is borrowed, or the humanly impossible walk of the regenerate is imposed upon the unregenerate.

2. A new standing.

It was never said of any Old Testament saint that he was "a member of the body of Christ," or that he was "accepted in the beloved"; but the New Testament saint is all this, and has been "made the righteousness of God in him" (Rom. iii. 21, 22; x. 3, 4; 1 Cor. i. 30; 2 Cor. v. 21; Eph. i. 6).

3. A new sufficiency.

As truly as the Christian is a new creature and a heavenly citizen, so every condition within the new life is supernatural. The human limitation has been perfectly anticipated and provided for in the fact that the all-sufficient Spirit indwells every saved person (Rom. v. 5; viii. 9; Jno. iii. 6; vii. 39; xiv.

16, 17; Gal. vi. 4; 1 Cor. vi. 19). This universal abiding presence of the Spirit in a saved person, providing nothing short of the sufficiency of God for the least of His children, is a vastly different relationship than had been known before (Jno. vii. 37–39).

4. A new service.

Service, in the Old Testament, consisted largely in going into the temple, or tabernacle, to offer a sacrifice for sin: in the New Testament it is going out to the uttermost parts of the earth to witness to a perfect sacrifice fully accomplished. The former had self with its personal needs in view: the latter has found rest for self, and from self, and moves out to others in the mighty empowering "gifts of the Spirit."

5. A new rule of life.

The Epistles of the New Testament present a distinct heavenly rule of life which is gracious in contrast to law. They instruct a heavenly citizen in his normal walk and life. Attempted obedience to these precepts will never make a heavenly citizen: they are rather set before him because he is already a heavenly citizen through the power of God. Therefore they do not carry a legal imperative; but are presented as "beseechings," and under the suggestive phrase, "as it becometh saints." The law was given to Israel alone and only when she had been redeemed out of Egypt. The law of Moses did not redeem Israel: it became her rule

of life after she was redeemed. That redemption out of Egypt anticipates, in type, the blood redemption of the cross. So, also, a new governing rule of life is given to those who are looking back in saving faith to Calvary. Obedience to the new principle of life under grace would not save one. It only suggests the normal manner of life for those who have already become heavenly in being through the alone sufficient power of God. The new principle of life through grace is superhuman (Eph. iv. 1–3, 30; v. 18–22; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; 1 Pet. ii. 9, etc.); but according to the purpose of God it is to be perfectly fulfilled by the power of the indwelling Spirit (Gal. v. 16; Rom. viii. 2). The law said, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. xviii. 18; Mt. xix. 19; xxii. 39; Rom. xiii. 9; Gal. v. 14; Jas. ii. 8). Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another as I have loved you" (Jno. xiii. 34, 35; xv. 12, 13). There could not be a more impossible requirement than that we, of ourselves, should love as He has loved us; but such divine love is produced in us by the unhindered Spirit (Rom. v. 5; Gal. v. 22).

6. A new purpose.

Most evidently God is not now offering an earthly kingdom to any one nation; nor is He saving every individual of all nations. There is a process of selection going on (if it be held that God is now accomplishing His own will), and, while the Gospel might be preached to all, there is no evidence from

history that all who have heard it have been saved, or teaching in the Scripture that all would be saved. God is seen to be dealing with individuals, both Jews and Gentiles, and in such a manner that each one thus dealt with is to be finally changed into the image of Christ, and collectively as His body and bride to be forever with Him.

7. A new prospect.

Centuries before the cross the King and His Messianic kingdom was rightfully expected by the nation to whom the manifestation of the King and the establishment of the kingdom had been promised, and this kingdom was still in view when the new revelation concerning the return of Christ was presented. While the promises to Israel are suffering prolonged delay, the heavenly bride is being called out, and unto her is given a new hope and prospect: "The Lord is at hand" (Phil. iv. 5).

In the light of these seven "present truth" realities we are enabled to recognize how great is the effect of the change from "the law which came by Moses" and "grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ." And when these changed, age-long conditions have run their course we are assured that there will be a return to the legal kingdom grounds and the exaltation of that nation to whom pertain the covenants and promises.

The last two elements of "present truth" presented above will each in turn be the basis for a further study of kingdom truth.

VII

THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY

THE new purpose of God in this age is seen to be the out-calling of a heavenly people. They form a part of the kingdom in its present mystery form (Mt. xiii.); but are in no way related to the Messianic earthly kingdom of Israel other than that they, as the bride of the King, will be associated with Him in His reign (Eph. v. 29–32; 2 Tim. ii. 12; Rev. xx. 6; xxi. 9–21). The disciples, being Jews, needed no instruction as to the message of the kingdom; but in marked contrast to this they did not once grasp any reference Jesus made to His sacrificial death by which He was to open the flood-gates of the grace of God. Even after His resurrection and forty days of instruction concerning the kingdom of God (Acts i. 3) they questioned Him as to the realization of the nation's hope: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6). His reply is suggestive: "It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father has put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i. 7, 8).

He does not tell them their kingdom is abandoned, or merged into a spiritual conquest of all nations: He plainly infers that every promise of God is still intact; but assigns to them the immediate ministry of the new gospel age. Even this they failed to comprehend; for it was not until Peter by divine compulsion had first preached the Gospel to Gentiles in Cornelius' house, and Paul and Barnabas had returned to Jerusalem reporting the same outflowing salvation to Gentiles as had been given to Jews that they were able to grasp the meaning of the new age. This new light came in connection with the deliberations of the first church council, called by the mother church at Jerusalem, and recorded in Acts xv. 13–18. The issue before this council was of the present obligation of believers toward circumcision, the sign of Judaism. Any departure from that divinely given sign naturally required a new revelation of the scope and character of the new divine purpose. Apparently the Jewish system was being set aside.

The conclusion of this first council is recorded thus: "And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might

seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (ages)."

There is no more important prophetic Scripture than this because of the arresting fact that it states the present-age purpose of God in relation to the future purposes, and places these in an exact order. The answer to the question of these Jewish Christians as to what was superseding Judaism (the new order having set aside its last distinction, circumcision), is given by James, the pastor of the church in Jerusalem. In this concluding discourse of the council he first states the divine purpose in the new age: "God at the first (in the house of Cornelius, as Peter had just stated) did visit Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" (vs. 14). The realization of the purpose to gather out a people is to be followed by a "return" of the divine Person to the earth and the reëstablishment of the Davidic order, and with this the long awaited world-wide blessing.

The meaning of the word "church" is the "called out ones," and this, it will be seen, is identical with the present-age purpose "to take out a people for his name." The word "church" appears for the first time in the Bible at Mt. xvi. 18, and here Jesus speaks of it as a then future thing: "On this rock I *will* build my church." An entirely new word is used, it would seem, that there should be no confusion of what this word represents with any Old

Testament revelation. The general use of the word in the Scriptures is of a collection, or assembly, of people. Thus Israel, separated and called out of Egypt, is termed by Stephen as "the church in the wilderness" (Acts vii. 38), and Luke uses the same word in mentioning the assembly of people in the town meeting at Ephesus (Acts xix. 29). When the word is now used to denote a company of professing Christians, or united worshippers, the reference is to an organization of people of one generation united by human ties, and not all, necessarily, saved ones. The deeper and more important use of the word, however, is the designation of the born-again ones of all generations since Pentecost as "baptized into one body and made to drink into one Spirit," each one so perfectly in the saving and transforming power of God that he will rightfully appear in glory in the exact likeness of Christ; and the whole company, finally perfected, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" will be His bride and His body, "the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Such a perfect organism, with its heavenly destiny and glory, could hardly be confused with Israel in the wilderness, called out and separated from Egypt, or the ungovernable assembly of the town meeting at Ephesus, called out for the time being from their homes. The latter are merely incidental: the former is no less than the primary purpose of God in this age of grace.

Little would be known of the out-called heavenly body from the teachings of Jesus, and nothing could

be known from any portion of the Old Testament, where it is not once directly mentioned. As recorded, Jesus spoke of the church but three times, and then as something yet to be realized by virtue of His own power; for He said, "I will build my church." That this was a reference to His own body and bride, rather than any local assembly, is evident from His following sentence: "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." How woefully they have prevailed against the professing, visible church! Not so, however, against His body and bride.

The fuller revelation of "the church which is his body" (Eph. i. 22, 23) was committed to the Apostle Paul. Her formation, being and destiny is the theme of the prison revelation and forms the basis of the prison epistles, especially Ephesians and Colossians. The Apostle, writing of this special revelation given to him concerning the purpose of God in this dispensation of grace, records that there was a mystery, or a sacred secret, not made known to other ages, but revealed to himself and the other Apostles that Gentiles were to become fellow heirs with the Jews in one body. A Gentile blessing had been a foreview of the Old Testament and was associated with the earthly kingdom glories of Israel; but Paul's revelation is of a new formation, into a new body, a new creation, "partakers of his promises in Christ by the Gospel," which is not found in the Old Testament. The whole passage is as follows: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of

Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; . . . which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. iii. 1–11).

From this passage it may be seen that the mystery, or sacred secret, concerning this age was the forming of a new body out of both Jews and Gentiles. This was the "eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Preceding this passage, the Apostle has, in Eph. ii. 11–18, not only defined the state of the Gentiles before God, but has made clear that, during this age, all hindrances that might arise from such distinc-

tions have been put away that He might of the two, Jews and Gentiles, make one "new man." "Reconciling both unto God in one body by the cross." The two elements of this body, then, are Jews and Gentiles,—Gentiles that were "far off," "made nigh by the blood of Christ," and Jews that, by covenant, were "nigh," with Gentiles, "reconciled unto God in one body by the cross": "Wherefore remember, that ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made with hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 11–18).

The risen and ascended Christ is "head over all things to the church which is his body." And they in turn are "the fullness of him that filleth

all in all." This is revealed in Eph. i. 18–23: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

The accomplishment of this age purpose Paul also mentioned in connection with its time relation to the kingdom covenanted to Israel in Rom. xi. 25–27: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

All this, it will be seen, is in complete accord with the conclusions of the council at Jerusalem: "God at the first did visit Gentiles, to take out of

them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" (Acts xv. 14–17).

This heavenly body is being formed by a process. It had a distinct time of beginning. It could not have existed before the cross; for it must be reconciled unto God by that cross. It could not have existed before His resurrection; for its members must partake of His resurrection life. It could not have existed before His ascension; for it would have been a body without its Head (Eph. i. 22, 23). It could not have existed before Pentecost; for until then there could have been no organic union by the baptism of the Spirit into one body (1 Cor. xii. 13).

"The church which is his body" began to be formed at Pentecost through the new ministries of the Spirit. Believers, at that time and through the baptism of the Spirit, became an organism by virtue of a divine life indwelling all, and that life was Christ. This is fitly illustrated in Scripture by the figures of the vine and the branches and the head and the body. One life animates every branch of the vine and every member of the body: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one

body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many" (1 Cor. xii. 12–14). "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. xii. 5). "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph. v. 30).

Thus the formation of the body began at Pentecost and since that time "the Lord has added unto the church daily such as should be saved." It remains to be seen, then, that since the Lord is adding to this body, it is growing, or increasing, unto its perfection during the course of this age. Special ministry gifts, unknown in other ages, are bestowed in this age to serve at divine appointments and in divine power for a limited time, or "*until*" the body is completed: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ: *till* we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 7–13).

This, it should be noted, is not the individual perfection of many; but rather the perfection of one body by the adding of many individuals until there is formed "the full measure of the stature of Christ." The Apostle continues with regard to the growing of this body: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh *increase* of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. iv. 15, 16).

So, again, the church is said to be a growing temple eventually to reach its completion, according to another passage in the same Epistle: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built (lit. are being built) upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together *groweth* unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 19–22). "On this rock I will *build* my church."

The outward visible church is not equivalent to "the church which is his body." To that imperfect organization these revelations concerning organic union with Christ and perfection in Christ could hardly be applied.

VIII

THE BRIDE, THE LAMB'S WIFE

EACH of the seven figures used in the New Testament regarding the church suggest some distinct vital relationship between Christ and His heavenly body of people. As sheep they are utterly dependent upon the Shepherd; as branches they draw the vital life from the Vine; as stones in a building they rest on the Corner Stone and are mutually dependent on one another; as newly created beings they stand in the Last Adam, the Head of the new race; as a kingdom of priests they are the objects of intercession of the High Priest and through Him receive their own priestly ministry; as members of His body they are the visible representatives of the Head and the instruments of His manifestation and service; and as the bride of the Lamb they are yet to share in and manifest the ineffable glory and majesty of the Bridegroom-King.

The consummation of the relationships between the Bridegroom and the bride is still to her an anticipation yet to be realized. He has espoused her to Himself: the wedding day awaits His imminent return. It would be normal for her to be looking and longing for His return. Such an

attitude is rightly to be expected where any real love for Him exists. His return, however, and the celestial union with His bride will not await the results of the meager power of her poor love for Him. All the divine purpose in calling her out, the present tender grace expended in her behalf, like His certain return, are dependent only on His love for her. This is a "love that passeth knowledge." Here is sufficient motive to insure the accomplishment of all that the divine wisdom and power can perfect. By no less a perfection will His bride appear in glory. She, because He is able, will be presented faultless before the presence of His glory to His own exceeding joy (Jude 24). That the church is to be His bride and then, as now, the objects of His measureless love, wisdom and power is stated in Eph. v. 25–32: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

In this passage there is reference to the church as His body: "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." There is also abundant reference to the church as His bride: "I speak," Paul writes, with reference to husbands and wives, "concerning Christ and the church." He loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might present it unto Himself a glorious church. So shall she be "manifested together with him in glory."

The eternal purpose of God in the marvels of His present saving grace is said to be for the realization of these heavenly glories. "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. i. 3). "To the praise of the glory of his grace" (Eph. i. 6). So again the purpose of God as it sweeps from one eternity to the other is revealed in another Scripture: "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 6–8).

He hath saved us unto good works, or service (Eph. ii. 10), and that we might not perish but have everlasting life (Jno. iii. 16): but the passage

quoted above seems to indicate that the primary motive of God in redemption is not to provide that which accrues to man; rather, He is redeeming His people in order that by them in "the ages to come" He may display the "riches of his grace" as manifested in "his kindness toward us through Jesus Christ." When this heavenly people are perfected into the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," "conformed into his image," and "like him," it will be a demonstration, before all created beings, of the marvels of His grace, and upon such a scale and in such ranges of glory as will wholly satisfy Him. It is His "exceeding joy" that is in view. Salvation in Christ will manifest His grace; for it is by grace ye are saved. The very purpose of God limits the method by which it must be done. His purpose is to declare His grace and so salvation is by grace alone. Where in this marvellous declaration is there any place for human device or merit? Who would compare this revealed destiny with any that has ever been imagined by the human mind? Has not God so stripped man of every self-glorifying moral quality in His sight that He might, beginning with such utter nothingness, perform an incomparable display of His unmerited favor and grace?

It is significant that Jesus likened the bride, for whom He gave Himself that He might purchase her unto Himself, to a pearl of "great cost," for which the merchant man sold all that he might possess it. And the very formation of the pearl is

suggestive: It is said that the pearl is built up, layer upon layer, by the secretions which flow out of the wound in the side of the shell-fish inflicted by the sharp points of the minute grain of sand lodged under the shell. The pearl, though formed in the triple darkness of the shell, the mud and the sea, and never having been affected by the light of the sun, has power when brought up to the light to catch its rainbow splendor and reflect it back in all its glory. So the church, the "pearl of great cost," is being formed, through the blood that flowed from His riven side, down here in the sea of the nations in this "dark age"; but "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him." The church will then "be to the praise of the glory of his grace." "In the ages to come" shewing forth the riches of His grace and glory. "The Lamb is the light thereof."

Referring again to the conclusions of the council at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 13–18), it is there stated that a Gentile company is being called out for His name. The "name" when used to designate Deity seems to carry with it the thought of the Person—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." So this body of people thus called out may be said to be a people for His Person. As the bride is for the person of the bridegroom, so the church is for the Person of her Lord. This is especially disclosed in Jno. xiv. 1–3. "Let not your heart be troubled:

ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto *myself;* that where *I am*, there ye may be also."

From this passage it will be seen that the bride of the Lamb does not occupy any mansion in the Father's house: He is preparing a place for her and as certainly will come again and receive her, not into the mansions, but unto *Himself.* He loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might purchase it unto *Himself.* "That where *I am* there ye may be also." "Father, I will that they also may be with *me* where *I am.*" "And so shall we ever be *with* the Lord." "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto *himself* a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

To Israel He is Messiah, Immanuel and King: to the church He is Lord, Head and Bridegroom. The covenants and destinies of Israel are all earthly: the covenants and destinies of the church are all heavenly.

As bride and consort the church will rightfully share with Him His reign (2 Tim. ii. 12; Rev. v. 10; xx. 6). The purpose of this age, evidently, is not to form a kingdom by securing subjects of the King: it is the calling out and perfecting into His very image those who will be co-reigners with Him in His yet future kingdom. The queen is never a

subject of the king: her place is to share with him his authority and glory and to rest in the bosom of the bridegroom in the palace of the king.

All the mansions in the Father's house will be occupied. In Heb. xii. 22–24 the inhabitants of heaven are recorded. In this passage it will be noted that there are both "angels" and the "spirits of just men made perfect" in addition to "the church of the first born": "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Here are seen the redeemed of all the ages in heaven; but not all are of the church. The "innumerable company of angels," and the "spirits of just men made perfect" are mentioned as separate from, but accompanying "the church of the first born." Here is room for the saints of all the ages who may occupy the "many mansions" without necessarily including the "bride of the Lamb" as an undistinguished part of that whole company; for it is said of her, "I go to prepare a place for you." Even John the Baptist, who was certainly of the Old Testament order, must designate himself as "the friend of the bridegroom": "He that

hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled" (Jno. iii. 29). Abraham, too, was called "the friend of God" (Lk. xiii. 28–30).

A real wedding feast, the feast of the ages, would hardly be attended by the Bridegroom and bride alone. Every element of a feast of such a character we are thus assured will be represented; but it is also clear that one seat will be reserved on His right for His spotless bride. Certainly it is not necessary to conclude that saints of other ages are excluded from heaven, or from the kingdom of God, because they are nowhere represented as organically related to the body and bride of Christ. To merge all the redeemed into one company, or to neglect the distinctions of Scripture, is to do violence to very much of divine revelation.

The church is seen typically, though not directly, in the Old Testament. She, as a royal priesthood, is foreshadowed in the priesthood of the Old Testament; as a new generation, or race, she is the antitype of that first race which began and fell in Adam; she is the present tabernacle of God, His present abode in the Spirit; she constitutes the true branches of the True Vine; and the sheep that know His voice and will not follow the voice of a stranger. The church is that body formed out of the wound of the side of her living Head, as Eve was formed from Adam.

The bride of Isaac typified the church as did the brides of other marriage unions recorded in the Old Testament. When Isaac was forty years of age Abraham, fearing lest he might marry some woman of the land, sent his trusted servant, whose name is not given, far away into the old home country to secure a bride for Isaac. When he had made the long journey he was divinely led to select Rebecca to whom that strange offer was to be made. She was asked to go with him, a servant she had never known, to a country she had never seen, to a land from which she would never return, and become the bride of a man she had never met. Truly this was a most unusual request; but she was able to say, "I will go." Then was placed before her some real tokens of Isaac's wealth as foretastes of that inheritance. She decided her future course and lot wholly on the urgent appeal and description given by the unnamed servant of Abraham. They began the long journey back, and she did not know whether to go north, or south, east, or west; she must be wholly led by this servant in whom so much confidence had been imposed. As they journeyed during the many days it can be easily believed that he never lost an opportune moment to picture to her new attractions and beauties in the prince Isaac to whom she journeyed. At last she lifted her eyes and exclaimed with a cry of delight:

"What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?"

And the last ministry of that faithful servant was to witness:

"It is my master."

She sprang down from the beast and ran to meet him and no more blessed marriage union is recorded in all the records of the Old Testament.

God the Father, typified in Abraham in various ways (see Gen. xxii. 1–14), sent the unnamed Servant, the Holy Spirit (the Spirit's name has never been revealed. He is now known only by descriptive titles) to call out a bride for His well beloved Son. The Servant does not speak of Himself (Jno. xvi. 13), but glorifies the Son before our eyes, and if we can say: "whom having not seen I love," there is given unto us an earnest of our coming inheritance and glory with Him (2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 14). How little we then know of our pilgrim journey! But "as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God." And while we thus journey that faithful Guide does not cease to unfold the riches of grace and glory that meet in Jesus our Lord (Jno. xvi. 12–15), and the day is not far away, we believe, when we shall lift our eyes and exclaim, "Who comes yonder?" And the final ministry of our unnamed Guide will be to present us to Him without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, "and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

No human thought needs to be added to God's own description of the blessed estate of those He

is now calling out and redeeming by His blood as they will appear glorified together with Him: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the west three gates; on the south three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall

of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the

nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. xxi. 9–xxii. 5).

IX

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

THE term "kingdom of heaven" may rightfully be applied to any phase of the divine government in the earth. It has already passed through several distinct stages as recorded in history. God ruled through the patriarchs, judges and kings of Israel. The last rightful King of that nation was crowned with thorns. His rejection and crucifixion was the closing of the past dispensation and the grounds of blessing in the new age. Even before the cross His rejection was foreseen and the rejected King began from that time to speak of His death, the new dawning age, and of His return to this earth in power and glory. Then the rejected and postponed kingdom blessings were to be realized for Israel and all Gentile nations through them.

All this, even His rejection and the delay in the earthly kingdom, was in the foreknowledge and plan of God. Christ, as foreseen by prophets, was pictured in the figure of the coming "Lamb" sacrifice to be slain, as well as in the figure of the coming "Lion" King to reign; though the larger proportion of prophecy concerned itself with the

latter. The prophets uttered these conflicting themes; they saw the sufferings and the glory; they did not comprehend the centuries of this church age that were to intervene. They saw the mountain peaks, but not the expanse of the valley of this age of grace. It pleased God to keep this period of time and its purpose as a sacred secret, or mystery, until the time of its realization. It is imperative that this fact should be understood, else an approach to Scriptural knowledge of the kingdom program is impossible.

Christ treated the present unannounced age as a sacred secret, or mystery, demanding explanation. Since His revelatory discussions on the subject it, like all other New Testament mysteries, remains no longer a mystery when explained. The preview of the facts of this mystery age are given in the seven parables of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. It is also significant that this revelation of a new unforeseen age should follow immediately upon the first evidence of His rejection as Messiah King. These parables reveal the elements and conditions which characterize this age and which had been withheld in the councils of God. They are therefore spoken of as "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. xiii. 11), and this whole age may be rightfully termed "the kingdom of heaven in its mystery form." These parables treat of the beginning, course and end of the age which was then wholly future, but much of which has been faithfully fulfilled in the history of the Christian era.

The present period will therefore be seen to be that in which the kingdom of heaven in its mystery form is manifested and the divine unfolding of these mysteries to be a revelation of the present divine government and purposes in the earth. There are various other mysteries in the New Testament, some of which lend contributing elements to the one all-inclusive mystery age. Those New Testament mysteries which are related to the kingdom in its present form may be classified into three groups, each group representing a distinct purpose of God in the present age:

First, Israel's present position and age-long blindness is said to be a mystery: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant with them when I shall take away their sins" (Rom. xi. 25–27).

Second, The church is involved in four mysteries: (*a*) As the body now being formed out of both Jews and Gentiles (Eph. iii. 1–10; Rom. xvi. 25; Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3). (*b*) As the bride of Christ (Eph. v. 28–32). (*c*) As an organism by virtue of the indwelling Christ (Gal. ii. 20; Col. i. 26, 27). (*d*) As to the manner of her departure from this earth (1 Cor. xv. 51–53; 1 Thess. iv. 13–18).

Third, The present age manifestation of the "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess. ii. 7; Mt. xiii. 33; Rev. xvii. 5, 7). The central passage of this aspect of truth is here given: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thess. ii. 3–10).

Paul, standing at the threshold of the new age, could say, "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." He then declares that this will continue until its culmination in the "wicked one," the "man of sin." This permitted development of the whole course of evil, he shows, will be under divine restraint in order that it may be consummated at the

exact time divinely predetermined. Thus Israel's present blindness, the out-calling of the church and the final manifestations of evil will all be concluded in age-ending scenes; and these, taken together, form the distinguishing elements of the entire mystery age.

Iniquity had a definite beginning; it runs a well defined course; it comes to a predicted end. It has been the evident purpose of God to put every assumption of Satan and fallen man to an experimental test. This was illustrated in the case of Job. God did not deny the challenge of Satan as to the faithfulness of Job; He rather gave Satan authority to make full trial. Another plan might have been easier for Job, but we must believe that enough was gained by the trial to warrant the plan. The experimental trial on the part of God of all issues flowing out of any challenge of the Creator on the part of the creature, explains, in part, the various testings of the ages. Much suffering and sorrow might have been averted had sin been wholly crushed at its beginning; but again we must believe that much more has been gained by the long delayed termination of evil. From the above passage it would seem that evil would have long concluded its own course in the lawlessness of fallen hearts had its natural energy not been restrained. It has been restrained, we are led to believe by the evidence, that the body and bride of Christ may be made complete.

The end of this age is outlined in an important

body of Scripture which is found in portions of Old Testament prophecies, of the Gospels, and is a large portion of the writings of the second Epistles and Revelation. In all these records the disclosures concerning persons, times and events are in perfect agreement, though found in such widely separated sources, and to ignore them, or to form different conclusions than those which they predict, discredits the validity of the testimony of the one inspiring Spirit. The age is to end with a tribulation period which is not difficult to distinguish, chiefly from the fact that it is spoken of as the incomparable sorrow upon the earth: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Mt. xxiv. 21, 22). "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. xii. 1). "A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been even the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations" (Joel ii. 2). "And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel

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and concerning Judah. For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. xxx. 4–7).

Three distinct divine purposes may be discovered in this tribulation time. The passages here referred to are of great importance, but cannot be quoted in full:

First, It is the time of "Jacob's trouble." Special and final judgments upon the chosen people, which have long been foretold, will end their age-long afflictions (Jer. xxv. 29–39; xxx. 4–7; Ezk. xxx. 3; Dan. xii. 1; Amos v. 18–20; Obadiah 15–22; Zeph. i. 7–18; Zech. xii. 1–14; xiv. 1–3; Mal. iv. 1–4; Mt. xxiv. 9–31; Rev. vii. 13, 14).

Second, This period will be a time when judgment will fall on the Gentile nations and the sin of the whole earth (Job xxi. 30; Ps. ii. 5; Isa. ii. 10–22; xiii. 9–16; xxiv. 21–23; xxvi. 20, 21; xxxiv. 1–9; lxiii. 1–6; lxvi. 15–24; Jer. xxv. 29–38; Ezk. xxx. 3; Joel iii. 9–21; Zech. xii. 1–14; Mt. xxv. 31–46; Rev. iii. 10; xi. 1–xviii. 24).

Third, This time is also characterized by the appearance and reign of the "Man of Sin" whose career, like the period in which he appears, cannot begin until the divine restraint is removed (2 Thess.

ii. 6–10), and will end with the return of Christ coming in "power and great glory" (2 Thess. ii. 8). This world-ruler is the fitting manifestation of the last efforts of Satan in his opposition against God and his attempted self-exaltation above the Most High.

Again, The church is nowhere seen nor in any way related to the tribulation period, which is constantly represented and distinctly said to be the time of "Jacob's trouble." There is great salvation during the tribulation and a mighty harvest of saints from it are seen in the glory, even a multitude which no man can number (Rev. vii. 9–17). It does not follow that these are a part of "the church which is his body" any more than that the saints of the Old Testament are a part of that body: rather the church is to be saved out of the hour of trial that shall come upon the earth to try all men (Rev. iii. 10). Not only is this true in Old Testament types (judgment cannot fall on Sodom until Lot and his family are removed) but the tribulation is not once mentioned in the Epistles wherein the instruction and warnings are given to the church, nor does the church or the first resurrection appear in those passages which are descriptive of the tribulation. In the reckoning of God, most evidently, the tribulation, or time of Jacob's trouble, does not concern the church.

The character of the tribulation and its terrible display of the wrath of God is described in the successive judgments predicted in Rev. ii.–xix., but of

the church it is said, "we are not appointed unto wrath" (1 Thess. v. 9; see also Rom. v. 9; 1 Thess. i. 10).

To contend that the church must pass through that unprecedented period virtually destroys every promise of His imminent return; for in such a case the church to be consistent must have her eyes on earth conditions when she is rather enjoined to be looking for her Lord from heaven. By such a theory the blessed hope is lost. So, also, the very martyrdom of loyal saints, in that period (Rev. xiii. 15), would render groundless any hope for the translation of living saints at its end. And so, again, much that is most precious in church truth is confused and lost when related to "the time of Jacob's trouble."

As the Lord appears from heaven in power and great glory (Rev. xix. 11) He is accompanied by the armies of heaven, their identity being revealed by the white linen they wear (cf. Rev. xix. 14 with 7–10). At some previous time, the bride has met the Bridegroom, else how could she thus return with Him to reign? Is there not a danger in all this of saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming"?

The beginning, course and end of evil may be traced in four crises in the career of Satan. Sin began with him before recorded time when he said within the secret of his heart, "I will be like the Most High" (Isa. xiv. 14). It began as an assumption against God and a purpose to be like Him as an independent being, to gain the worship of other

beings, and the authority and government that belongs to God alone. Satan's sin appears again when he met the first man and woman in the garden. Here he pressed upon them the secret purpose of his own heart and the motive of his own action when he said, "be as gods." In the fall which has followed that choice we have a race wholly independent of God, assuming self-sufficiency, self-seeking and self-worship. The satanic principle of assumption toward God is therefore the present attitude of the fallen nature in its relation to God. Again, Satan met the last Adam in the wilderness. There was no occasion there for him to advise the Lord of Glory to assume to be God. Satan knew full well that He was Very God; yet his own heart's passion could not be restrained, for he said, "worship me." In the permissive providence of God, and under the evident experimental test of the mighty assumptions of Satan, the whole course of evil with its human governments and independence of God has developed. It was at work at the beginning of the age. It is to have its final manifestation and defeat at the end of the age. The last permitted demonstration of this timeless purpose of Satan will be by his masterpiece the world-ruling, world-worshipped "Man of Sin" sitting in the restored temple and declaring himself to be very God (2 Thess. ii. 3, 4). Christ warns those of His own nation who will be alive at the time of those terrible scenes that this "abomination of desolation," sitting in the holy place, is a sign of the end

and that the testing of evil by Jehovah will then be consummated (Mt. xxiv. 15).

To Daniel was given the vision of the course and end of the entire Gentile world period extending from the last captivity until the setting up of the covenanted kingdom in the earth. He also sees the final form of iniquity as gathered up in the reign of the "Little Horn" (vii. 8, 20–26; viii. 24, 25; ix. 26, 27) and the willful king (xi. 36–45; xii. 11). Ezekiel sees the same world-ruler as the "Prince of Tyrus" (Ezk. xxviii. 1–10), and there closely related to Satan as the "King of Tyrus" (Ezk. xxviii. 11–19). Christ speaks of him, quoting from Daniel, as the "Abomination of Desolation" (Mt. xxiv. 15; Dan. ix. 27), and, again, as the one who will come in his own name (Jno. v. 43). John sees him as the rider on the white horse (Rev. vi. 2), and the "Beast" (Rev. xiii. 4, 10). Paul sees him as the "Man of Sin" (2 Thess. ii. 3).

In all these prophecies this coming one is set forth as being the superlative representation of Satan's power and the incarnate realization of his timeless secret purpose. Satan offered all his world power and authority to Christ in the wilderness (Lk. iv. 5, 6), but it was rejected. This world power will be received and administered by the "Man of Sin" during the closing scenes of the age.

It is not possible in the space allowed here, nor is it germane to the purpose of this book, to trace the details of revelation regarding the tribulation and the "Man of Sin." This has been faithfully done

by others and to some extent in the author's previous work, "Satan."

It may be concluded that the final demonstration of Satan's claim, with its certain failure, will prove him to have utterly failed in his ultimate aim, and then will every mouth be closed before the God of the whole earth. The righteous judgments of God against all wickedness, assumption and blasphemy will be accepted and His ways, which are past finding out, will be vindicated. "The mystery of iniquity doth already work," but it must proceed to its determined end and this mighty development of evil is one of the divine purposes of the entire period of this mystery age. God incarnate in the Son is a New Testament mystery (1 Tim. iii. 16), and Satan, seeking to be as God, and incarnate in the "Man of Sin" will, in that being, execute the final manifestation of the age-long "mystery of iniquity."

X

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

UNTO Daniel, a prophet of the exile, was given the vision of the course of the whole Gentile period extending from the last captivity to the second coming of Christ,—that period spoken of in Scripture as "the time of the Gentiles" (Lk. xxi. 24). Daniel forecasts the movements of the successive Gentile world powers during this period. He first interprets King Nebuchadnezzar's dream (ii. 37–45) as descriptive of four successive world powers. The same is again revealed in Daniel's dream (vii. 1–28) by the vision of four beasts, and again in the dream as recorded in the eighth chapter. By all these revelations the Gentile world governments then in view and which are to occupy the power and authority during the "times of the Gentiles," are seen to be Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. The latter of these is seen to be divided and subdivided as are the legs and toes of the great image, thus anticipating the present division of that territory as gathered about the two centers, Constantinople and Rome and the final ten governments yet to hold sway simultaneously on the original Roman empire.

Daniel also sees the same period as continuing seventy weeks of years, or heptads (ix. 24–27). In this vision this Gentile time of seventy heptads is divided into two distinct periods. One, the time before the "cutting off" of Messiah, in other words, the rejection of Christ; and the other, the time after that event. Sixty-nine weeks, or heptads, were required for the fulfillment of the first period. This began with Daniel's time, or when the edict to restore Jerusalem was sent forth, and ended with the cutting off of Messiah. This was exactly fulfilled in the 483 years (69x7) before Christ. As the prophets in their foreview evidently took no account of time during which Israel was to be cut off from national blessings, the present church age, which began with the cross of Christ and ends at an unrevealed time, is in no instance considered in their foreview, and the remaining moments of the prophesied time will not be counted off until this mystery age of the church has been completed.

The remaining predicted period, the seventieth week, or heptad, which is the time of the great tribulation (ix. 27) has yet to run its course to complete the whole time required to "finish transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." Thus it would seem clear that a period of seven years (shortened a little, Mt. xxiv. 22) will follow the present unpredicted period of the out-calling of the church

and precede the setting up of Messiah's kingdom. Notwithstanding the fact that the mystery age of the church did not come into the prophet's view, the time of the final heptad, or period of seven, was seen to be much delayed; for it was given to him to understand "what shall befall thy people in the latter days; for yet the vision is for many days."

Daniel sees the entire period of the "times of the Gentiles" extending from the captivity, through 483 years to the cross, and on beyond to the dateless coming of the "Ancient of Days" and the setting up of a kingdom by the God of Heaven which shall never be destroyed. "It shall break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms and it shall stand for ever" (ii. 44, 45; vii. 13, 14).

The portion of "the times of the Gentiles" following the cross, including as it does the church age, is clearly indefinite aside from the events assigned to Daniel's last "week" (cf. Dan. ix. 26 with Mt. xxiv. 6–14). This, as might be expected, is the divine method of accurately forecasting Israel's future while reserving any clear light on the sacred secret of this mystery age. There was no secret regarding the "times of the Gentiles," with the attending present position of Israel in the world; but hidden within that era is a briefer period, "the fullness of the Gentiles" (Rom. xi. 25) about which nothing had been revealed. It is the church that is the "fullness of him that filleth all in all," and that body completed is the "perfect stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. i. 23; iv. 13; Acts

xv. 13, 14; 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13). It is clear, therefore, that a mystery age has been thrust, as a parenthesis, into that which had been previously revealed for the fulfillment of the purpose of God.

The moral character of this mystery age at its beginning, like its moral development and end are clearly presented in the New Testament. At the very beginning the inspired writers spoke of it as an evil age: "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world" (age, Gal. i. 4). "And be not conformed to this world" (age, Rom. xii. 2). "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (age, 2 Tim. iv. 10). "In whom the god of this world (age) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Cor. iv. 4). So the church was fully warned from the beginning as to this age, and taught concerning her pilgrim character while here and her holy calling and separateness from the "evil age."

A portion of the time during which Israel was to be dispersed and deprived of national blessing had been divinely accounted for by the "seventy weeks" revelation given to Daniel. The fact and purpose of this present mystery age was not mentioned in this revelation; hence there was need that this sacred secret should be revealed when its time had fully come. This Jesus does in the seven parables of Matthew xiii., it being ever God's method to give a foreview of all His great purposes and undertakings. The course and moral development of this age is here divinely presented in these

parables and this, together with Daniel's seventy weeks, completes the revelation with respect to the entire period known as "the times of the Gentiles."

In these parables this parenthetical age covering the timeless period between Daniel's sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks is treated as the mystery form of the kingdom of heaven. It is the government of God over a period of various mystery purposes in the earth, to wit; the continued blindness of Israel throughout the age, the consummation, at the end, of all forms of evil, and the out-calling of the Church.

Each of the age-characterizing mysteries is said to be terminated by the same event. The blindness of Israel, mentioned in Rom. xi. 25, is followed by the promise: "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (Rom. xi. 25–27). So the career of the "Man of Sin," who is said to be the consummation of the "mystery of iniquity," is ended thus: "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thess. ii. 8). So, also, it is written concerning the completion of the calling out of the church: "After this I will return" (Acts xv. 13–16). These great sacred secrets, it will be noticed, constitute the very elements in the parables which define the character and object of the age.

In the first of the parables a sower goes forth to sow; but only a fourth part of the seed thus sown comes to full development. The parable is interpreted by Christ and so permits of no speculation: "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he that received seed by the wayside. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation and persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty" (Mt. xiii. 18–23).

In full agreement with experience during the past nineteen hundred years of Christian history the parable teaches that a great portion of those to whom the Word is preached are not saved by it, and lest it might be concluded by His hearers that, while this was the condition at the beginning of the age it would not be so at the end, the second parable, that of the wheat and the tares, immedi-

ately follows. This, like the first, is interpreted by Christ Himself and its meaning is made plain: "He answered and said unto them, He that sowed the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world (age); and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of the world (age). The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Mt. xiii. 37–43).

In this parable the born-again ones, the members of His body, are seen as the "wheat," or the "children of God" amidst the whole sphere of religious profession and assumption. It is important to note the age-closing scenes according to this interpretation: "So shall it be in the end of the age." Certainly this does not depict a regenerated world. It clearly pictures an out-called people together with the full ripening of iniquity in the unregenerate portion of humanity.

The third parable is not interpreted, nor is any following it explained; but enough has been revealed by the two interpretations to form a key to

all that follow. They present aspects of the kingdom of heaven in the one mystery form and so must be in fullest agreement. In the third parable He presents truth through the figure of the mustard seed and tree. Again the testimony of history and the teaching of the parable agree. The very small beginning in the early days of the church has developed out of all due proportion in mere members and includes all professing Christendom. The great tree now shelters even the birds of the air. It is significant that the birds of the first parable are represented as catching away the good seed. The truly saved ones are still a "little flock" compared with the multitude of nominal church supporters.

The fourth parable is of the three measures of meal which all became leavened. Throughout the Bible leaven symbolizes evil, and Jesus fully defined His use of the word on other occasions. He used the word to represent evil doctrine to the extent of formality (Mt. xxiii. 14, 16, 23–28), unbelief (Mt. xxii. 23, 29; Mk. viii. 15), and worldliness (Mt. xxii. 16–21; Mk. iii. 6). Paul uses the same word with reference to "malice and wickedness" (1 Cor. v. 6–8). Its process of working is by a subtle permeating of the mass into which it is introduced. This much misunderstood parable teaches, in accord with the other parables and all related Scripture, that which has proven to be consonant with experience in the history of the age, namely, that even the true believers, and certainly

the mass of professors, will be sadly influenced by these various forms of evil. There can be no question but that this has been true to the present hour.

The fifth parable is evidently a teaching concerning Israel, His "treasure" (Ex. xix. 5; Deut. iv. 20), including all the tribes, hid in the field, which is the world. When He shall call forth His "treasure" it will be by virtue of the fact that He hath, as the Lamb of God, taken away the sins of the world. One, we are told, sold all and purchased that field. What Jehovah may do now, or at any time in behalf of any people, will be because of the atoning value of the priceless blood of His Son. The Only Begotten Son was given for the world.

The mystery of the church, the pearl of great cost, as set forth in the sixth parable, has already been considered. She is not now hid in the field, the world; but is being formed there, and is awaiting her coming glory when, in the ages to come, she shall display His glory and grace. She too is redeemed at the same priceless cost (1 Pet. i. 18).

The last parable restates the fact of the outworking of the two great mysteries,—the out-called church and the mystery of iniquity, as co-existing to the time of the end. The good fish shall be gathered into vessels and the bad shall be cast away. "So shall it be in the end of the age."

Thus the three great mysteries of this mystery age were related in the teachings of Jesus to the beginning, course and end of the present age.

The following Scriptures give added light on the thought and expectation of Christ and the apostles concerning the course and end of this age:

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Mt. xxiv. 4–8). "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Mt. xxiv. 37). "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save *some*" (1 Cor. ix. 22). "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. iv. 1). "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. iii. 1). "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. iii. 13). "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. iv. 3, 4). "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after

their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. iii. 4).

To this may be added the other parables of Jesus regarding the kingdom in its mystery form and the whole divinely given history of the church as previewed in Rev. ii. 1–iii. 22. So, also, the more detailed description of the age-ending scenes as given by Daniel and in Rev. iv. 1–xx. 3.

There is an age of universal blessing coming upon the earth; but it is in no way represented in Scripture to be any part, or product, of this mystery age. On the other hand, it is revealed that it will be ushered in by the same divine movements that form the closing scenes of this age. The impelling motive of the service of saints at the present time must be nothing less than the world-wide testimony to the Gospel of God's grace through which Christ may finish the gathering out of a people for His Person and soon complete His bride. The great soul-winners of past generations have been actuated by this vision and purpose, and there could hardly be a ministry in the mind and power of the Spirit that did not wholly agree with the revealed purpose of God in the present mystery age.

XI

THE CALL OF THE BRIDEGROOM

IMMEDIATELY before His death Jesus delivered two great discourses which served to culminate His teaching ministry. Though spoken at about the same time and to the same disciples there is the widest difference between them. One, "The Olivet discourse" (Mt. xxiv. 4–xxv. 49, and Lk. xxi. 20–24), was spoken from the very Mount of Olives where His feet shall stand when He returns to the earth (Zech. xiv. 4). In this discourse only His own nation Israel is in view, and His instruction to them is of the events leading up to, and accompanying, His coming to the world in mighty judgments as King of kings and Lord of lords, and of the establishment, at that time, of the long delayed earthly kingdom. These great events had been before the eyes of prophets and seers from Moses to Christ, and will fulfill all covenants and promises for Israel including a world-wide Gentile blessing through them. This discourse naturally appears in the Gospel of the King, and completes the testimony committed to Matthew.

The other closing discourse was given in the upper room and continued on the way to the gar-

den (Jno. xiii. 1–xvii. 26). The subjects He presents to the disciples are those blessings that flow out of His death and resurrection; for here He speaks as though His cross was an accomplished fact. Thus the disciples are not now addressed as of the nation Israel; but as of the heavenly company who, by that cross, have come into heavenly union with Him (Jno. xiv. 20). Matthew records that John the Baptist announced Jesus as King: John records that he announced Jesus as "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Matthew has a nation in view, with its covenanted earthly kingdom: John has the individual in view, with the heavenly glory of the bride of Christ. In Matthew's Gospel the coming judgments and sorrows of earth with the following earthly glory are in view. In John's presentation the sacrificial atoning judgments of the cross and the heavenly glory are in view. In the one, the return of the King to the earth is presented: in the other, the call of the Bridegroom when He shall receive His bride from the earth into the mansion He has gone to prepare is recorded. One discourse is addressed to and concerns Israel in the earth: the other is addressed to and concerns the born-again ones of all nations who, by His grace, are already citizens of heaven. Each writer draws from the doings and teachings of Christ the particular materials required to present the picture divinely assigned to him.

No event, unless it be the cross, is more empha-

sized in Scripture than the personal return of Christ to this earth. This truth occupies at least one verse in twenty of the New Testament, and is not only the subject of the last words of Jesus to His own in the world, but is the subject of the closing words and promise of the Bible itself. John, who had been with Jesus on earth and in the glory, who had heard His promise to return again and who, in the Spirit, had witnessed those representations of the age-closing scenes as recorded in the Revelation, could say in answer to that final promise of Christ: "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." John certainly had all the facts before him, and if any child of God does not find the same response in his heart to the last promise of Jesus would it not be well to discover the unhappy cause?

The general fact of a return of Christ has, of necessity, found its way into all evangelical creeds; but individual readers who have hesitated to believe the literal promises of unfulfilled prophecy, have invented numerous interpretations of this body of Scripture. As must follow, every false interpretation utterly fails, at some point or points, to adequately deal with all the facts of revelation. If Christ's promised return was fulfilled at Pentecost by the coming of the Spirit then the two Persons of the Godhead are confused and every New Testament writer is found to be a false witness in that they each, writing long after Pentecost, presented the return of Christ as a then future event. If His return is said to be fulfilled in the death of a be-

liever, because of the fact that he then goes to be with Christ, there is a sad ignoring of every predicted event accompanying that return and a hopeless confusion of what the Scriptures call the "last enemy" and "the blessed hope." If His return is represented as fulfilled by the results of evangelization, on the ground that Christ is said to come into the life of every saved one, then a process has been substituted for that which in Scripture is said to be visible, sudden and personal, and every recorded circumstance and event accompanying His return has been ignored, or forgotten. If He is to return only after a millennium of a saved and sanctified earth, ushered in by the present form of Christian ministry and service, the numerous injunctions to be personally "watching," "waiting," "looking" and "loving" could well be taken as irony in the light of the fact that even a tendency toward such a man-made millennium is not discernible after two thousand years of God's dealings in grace with the children of men. If Satan, "loosed a little season" (Rev. xx. 3), can utterly spoil a full ripened millennium, what human agency can hope to establish that millennium while Satan still usurps the throne of this world (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4)? Scripture plainly predicts the sudden and violent imprisonment of that mighty age-ruler by the power of the returning Christ before any universal kingdom blessings can be secured on the earth (Rev. xix. 11–xx. 3; 2 Thess. ii. 1–10). It is not at all a question of whether the Holy Spirit, now present in the

world, could bind Satan and set up a kingdom in the earth, nor is it belittling to the work of the Spirit to point out that this is not the revealed purpose: rather, the whole question turns, and turns only, on what the revealed purpose of God is, which purpose must be determined in the light of every promise and event contained in the whole body of Scripture. A system of interpretation which does not account for every detail of revelation fails, in so far as it does not so account, to expose the meaning of the Word of God. If the same liberty were taken in the interpretation of redemptive truth that is often taken in prophetic truth, the doors would be instantly flung open to every soul-destroying heresy of the present time.

The thoughtful reader of Scripture has observed that the passages usually supposed to relate to the return of Christ naturally gather into two classes, or groups, totally different as to time, purpose and events. In one class of passages it is not represented that Christ will appear on the earth, or to any but His own redeemed people. These passages affirm that at this appearing the bodies of sleeping saints will come forth from the graves and, together with saints living on the earth, are to be caught up to meet Him in the air and thus are to be forever with the Lord. In the other class of passages, His return is to the earth, visibly, suddenly, in power and great glory, accompanied with the national judgments and followed by the setting up of His kingdom in the earth. In this group of prophecies the

Lord is seen to bring a mighty army of redeemed with Him and they are to share with Him His kingly reign.

Very much must yet be fulfilled, according to Scripture, before the events connected with the visible return of Christ to the earth are to occur (2 Thess. ii. 1–10). In contradistinction, however, no prophecy remains unfulfilled which in its order precedes the coming into the air to call for His own (1 Thess. iv. 13–18), other than that the outgathered bride shall have made herself ready ; and, therefore, that coming to call His own is the next event in the prophetic program. Of that day and hour no man could know ; but all generations of saints have been instructed to " watch," " wait," " look," " love " and " be ready." These words are descriptive of the attitude of heart of a bride awaiting the return of the one on whom all her life and love is centered. Especially would this be true if she knew not the day nor hour when he would return.

This call of the Bridegroom for His bride is an event that should never have been considered even as an aspect of the second coming of Christ. It is a mystery, or sacred secret, and, as such, is but a part of the whole mystery of the body and bride of Christ. It is only one item in the program of the out-calling and final gathering of the church. No revelation had been given to the Old Testament prophets of that great age purpose, and certainly no hint had been made as to the manner in which she would be taken out of the earth into her

heavenly bliss. On the other hand, the return of Christ to the earth in power and glory was seen by all the prophets from Moses to Christ. They beheld it as the consummation of all earthly blessings. The one, revealed only when the time for explaining the mystery was ripe, concerns a redeemed and heavenly people as to the manner of their final departure from this world: the other, foreseen by all the prophets, concerns Israel and the nations as to their judgments and final positions in a kingdom on the earth.

Of the first event it is written: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51. 52). This mystery, that not all should die, but that some should be changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," was never before revealed. So again in 1 Thess. iv. 13–18. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the

voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The dead in Christ will be raised first and the living saints caught up, and together they shall all go on in clouds to meet the Lord in the air (see Gen. v. 24; 2 Kings ii. 11) and to be forever with the Lord.

In the two passages quoted above Paul, by the use of the pronoun "we," has five times included himself as possibly to be among the living ones at the time of the Lord's call for His bride. This precludes a doubt as to the belief of the great Apostle in the imminent, personal, premillennial return of Christ. This hope was evidently his greatest motive for true character and service. So it has been to the great missionaries and soul-winners since his day.

A great moral effect was divinely intended in the promise of the imminent appearing of Christ. The church that has lost hope to the extent that she could say, "My Lord delayeth his coming," has soon been drunk with the wine of this world. It was this blessed expectation that was intended to teach us that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that

blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 12, 13). Only an apostate age could doubt this promise, Peter tells us: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. iii. 3, 4).

The eternal blessings of seeing His face and the reunion with loved ones gone before are by this hope but a moment removed. It is therefore the "blessed hope" and the comforting hope. We did not turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for death; but rather to "wait for his Son from heaven" (1 Thess. i. 9, 10). How natural for one who has really come to love Him to also "love his appearing" (2 Tim. iv. 8) above all the things of earth. The sweetest experiences foreshadowed in the bridal unions of the Old Testament and those experiences which are anticipated in the New Testament await that unannounced, signless and timeless summons to be forever at rest in His bosom of love: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jno. xiv. 1–3).

"I know not when the Lord will come,
Or at what hour He may appear.
Whether at midnight, or at morn,
Or at what season of the year.
I only know that He is near,
And that His voice I soon shall hear."

If the pastor is mourning over the cold, unspiritual condition of his church, let him consider the warm, glowing love and devoted service that has always accompanied the right understanding of this "blessed hope." If the church is given to carelessness and worldliness, let him recall that for this there has been provided the "purifying hope." As under-shepherds shall we not go down on our faces before God and there question whether we have been giving these dependent ones their "meat in due season"?

XII

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

IT has pleased the Spirit to present in the Gospel by Matthew the final revelations of the kingdom. These begin with the birth of the King, follow through His rejection, picture the mystery form of the kingdom, and predict the return of the King to the earth, the sphere of the kingdom of heaven. Like the Old Testament prophets, this kingdom traces only the movements of Israel, her failures, her sorrows, and her coming blessings under the reign of her returning Messiah King. In this Gospel the church appears incidentally as one of the several mysteries of a mystery age. In this body of Scripture the walk and destiny of the church are not once in view.

The events leading up to the realization of the kingdom in the earth are given by Matthew in their exact order. He begins with the lineage and birth of the King. This is followed by the announcement by the King, by John the Baptist and by the disciples, of the kingdom as at hand, with a call for the great predicted national repentance. During this season of the offered kingdom, the King announces the principles of righteousness that

must obtain when the kingdom comes. He teaches them to pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." The eleventh chapter records the first evidence of the rejection of the King,—the imprisonment of His forerunner. From this time the Jews take counsel to kill the King and the national rejection of His kingly claims is seen to deepen, as He faithfully continues to offer Himself, until their final answer to that offer is His crucifixion by the rulers of the nation. Yet even after His ascension, the unmeasured grace of God is seen in the final renewal of the kingdom offer to that nation through the Apostle Peter in his second sermon in Jerusalem. Peter begins by declaring that God's covenants will all be fulfilled, and that the death of Christ was anticipated by the prophets, and is now accomplished. He presents Christ as having been received into heaven to remain until the restitution of all things spoken of by the prophets. This is not a Gentile church enlarged to encompass the earth; but the mighty restoration of the Davidic order and the everlasting reëstablishment of the chosen nation in their own land, in full kingdom blessing, all of which God hath sworn with an oath to perform. This final appeal, like those which preceded it, was made with the same repentance in view: "Repent, that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." The answer of the nation to this appeal was the imprisonment of the messengers and the placing of the official ban upon their message.

As the evidence of rejection began to appear, according to Matthew, Jesus began to speak of His decease, of the hitherto unannounced mystery age, and that to be followed by His return to the earth as King in world-transforming scenes of judgment and the final establishment of the kingdom in the earth. Yet it must be remembered that only Israel is addressed and in this Gospel nations are seen only as related to her. Thus this Gospel is presented true to the exact scope of the kingdom of heaven.

Preceding the "Olivet discourse" of Mt. xxiv. 4–xxv. 46 a picture is given of the love of Christ for His nation and Jerusalem, the city of the great King. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Mt. xxiii. 37–39).

He would oft have gathered them (as He will yet do according to Mt. xxiv. 31); but they would not. Their house is left unto them desolate; but not forever. "Ye shall not see me henceforth, *till* ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The "Olivet discourse," it should be noted, was the Lord's reply to three questions asked of Him by His disciples: First, "When shall these things

be?" referring to His preceding prophecy as to the levelling of the stones of the temple to the ground. This first question is not answered in Matthew's account, but is found in Luke xxi. 20–24. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." This catastrophe, we are told, occurred in the year 70 A. D. The second question: "What shall be the sign of Thy coming?" and the third: "and of the end of the age?" are answered in Matthew's account beginning with xxiv. 4.

In opening this discourse Christ first describes the character of the whole age leading up to His return in power and great glory (iv. 31). The emphasis here is wholly on its end-time and its character, according to the request of His disciples. He, however, forecasts the whole time from the hour He was speaking through to the end. He divides this time into two periods. The first of

these, extending over nearly the whole period, or up to the last seven years, is characterized by war, famine, pestilence and earthquake which are doubtless to become increasingly violent as the time of the end draws near. He distinctly states that these age-long characteristics are common to the whole age, rather than constituting the end, or a sign of the end. The passage is as follows: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (lit. "but not yet is the end," or "this is not the end"). For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilence, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Mt. xxiv. 4–8).

This prophecy of the character of the age has been proven by nearly two thousand years of history. It is now seen to be as accurate a description of the age as a present-day historian, looking back over the centuries, could write. In spite of the dreams of peace for the "great enlightened twentieth century," so fresh in our minds, it stands without a parallel, even in its fifteenth year, as the superlative in all that the Lord Himself assigned as characterizing features of this age. These positive predictions, among many others, which find no possible Biblical interpretation against them, fell

from the lips of the Son of God and have been verified by the terrible facts of history up to the present hour; yet men dream of peace by man-made treaties and agreements as though our God had never spoken, or centuries of human greed and cruelty had not been experienced. War plainly belongs to the kingdom of Satan. It will cease for a thousand years while he is in the pit; but it will be instantly revived with all its horrors as soon as he is loosed a little season (Rev. xx. 1–9). Jesus said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world (world system): if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight" (Jno. xviii. 36). War results from the fallen nature of man, and is under the power of Satan, and will be until that mighty being is chained and put in the pit and the world-transforming kingdom of Messiah is set up in the earth. "Unto the end wars and desolations are determined" (Dan. ix. 26).

The war, famine, pestilence and earthquake features, which characterize this entire age, were spoken of by Christ as "the beginning of sorrows," or more literally, the beginning of birth pains (xxiv. 8). This evidently anticipates a time of sorrow, or of birth. He then proceeds to describe this coming period as the "great tribulation," which, as has been seen, is no other than the long predicted "time of Jacob's trouble," the time for the consummation of the "mystery of iniquity" and the final judgments on the whole Gentile world, to be terminated, as set forth in all other passages

on the subject, by the resistless power and glory of the coming King.

The description of this sorrow, or tribulation time, begins with the ninth verse. The time word "then," with which this verse opens, serves to shift the scenes from what has characterized the age to those conditions which will "*then*" prevail: "*Then* shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (xxiv. 9). This was distinctly addressed to Jews; for they alone could be "hated of all nations." It is the "time of Jacob's trouble" and they are the "elect" mentioned throughout the passage. He then said: "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (xxiv. 10–13).

This is not a condition of final salvation under grace: it was addressed to a nation who were to experience great tribulation, and forms a promise that will be most precious to those to whom it shall apply. So, also, the verse that follows is often confused with the present gospel of grace: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (xxiv. 14). A call to national repentance and the final announcement of the kingdom must yet again be taken up, as it will be by

"an hundred and forty and four thousand" sealed ones, and by the two witnesses, before the King returns (Rev. vii. 4–xi. 19). There is no such geographical demand on the preaching of grace in this age: on the contrary, the preaching here referred to cannot begin until the preaching of grace has accomplished its end in the calling out of His bride, which event and people are not at all in view in this great discourse. His bride will have been taken to Himself (before verse 9), for she is to be kept from the hour of trial that shall come on all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth (Rev. iii. 10). There will doubtless be great numbers saved during the tribulation (Rev. vii. 12–17). They will not, however, have part in the special blessings of the bride; for when she shall have entered in, the door will be shut.

Jesus then anticipates the "Man of Sin" standing in the "holy place" as foreseen by Daniel and later more fully described by Paul (2 Thess. ii. 1–9), and John (Rev. xiii. 3–10). This is followed by special warnings which are very similar to those given to the same nation with regard to the destruction of Jerusalem which took place in 70 A. D. The conditions of siege and the tribulation will be so similar that the warnings are almost identical; but it does not follow that they anticipate the same event. One is but a foreshadow of the other. The passage reads thus: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place (whoso readeth,

let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chamber; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For whereso-ever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes

of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (xxiv. 15–31).

In this passage it is important to note that the coming of Christ in power and great glory is the termination of the tribulation and time of Israel's regathering, as has been predicted by the prophets from Moses to Christ. The same order obtains in all similar passages (see Acts xv. 13–18; 2 Thess. ii. 1–10; so of the prophets and the Revelation). Israel, as a nation, not one generation, is to be divinely preserved until all be fulfilled: "Verily I say unto you, This generation (genea, race, or stock, Israel) shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (xxiv. 34, 35).

The returning Christ will find it on the earth as it was in the days of Noah (38), when some shall be taken away in judgment and some left for kingdom blessing. This is the opposite of the calling away of the bride, then some are taken for blessing and some are left in judgments and sorrow. The return of Christ is then presented as a testing of all profession under the parable of the ten virgins, and the test of all service under the parable of the talents. So, also, "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and

before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (xxv. 31). This is in no way comparable with the Great White Throne judgment of Rev. xx. 11–15. That is at the end of a thousand years of kingdom blessing: this is before. All is different in time, place and subjects, as well as conditions. This judgment is of nations at the end of the time of Jacob's trouble, and concerns their treatment of "my brethren" according to the flesh. The issue is to those on His right hand: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

XIII

THE RETURN OF THE KING

THOSE passages which describe the calling of the bride to meet the Bridegroom in the air are enriched with words of certainty and assurance. It is as though that event which had not been made known until the present age, and which portends such immediate blessings for the child of God should need an especial emphasis upon its certainty to strengthen the feeble faith of those to whom it is addressed. "If it were not so, I would have told you." "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord." "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Paul, when praying that we might know what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, adds the word of assurance that this will all be accomplished by "His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. i. 19–21). There could be no greater power than this and on this power this personal assurance may rest.

In distinction to this, those passages which picture the return of Christ to the earth as the Messiah King are laden with emphasis upon the fact that He comes with power and great glory. "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with power and great glory" (Lk. xxi. 27; Mt. xix. 28; xxiv. 30; xxv. 31; Mk. viii. 38; xiii. 26; Lk. ix. 26).

In the final picture at the end of the divine record the culminating event of all past ages is set forth in such majesty as it is possible for language to describe or human minds to comprehend (Rev. xix. 11–xx. 15). The Lord of Glory proceeds forth from His wedding, out from heaven, followed by His spotless bride. He comes in "power and great glory." Behold Him as lightning shining from the one part of heaven even unto the other. He has a "rod of iron" in His hand with which to dash the nations "in pieces like a potter's vessel." "His eyes are as a flame of fire" and "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword that with it he should smite the nations." That wicked one He shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. He is "revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the

beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations are before him as nothing; and they are counted to him as less than nothing, and vanity. . . . And he shall blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble." "God comes from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covereth the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise. And his brightness is like the sun; rays stream from his hand; and there is the hiding of his power. Before him goes the plague, and burning pestilence follows his feet. He stands and measures the earth: he looks and makes nations tremble; the everlasting mountains are broken in pieces, the eternal hills sink down: His ways are everlasting." "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him and it shall be very tempestuous round about him." "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with deep red garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore is redness in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the peoples not a man was with me: and I have trodden them in my anger, and trampled them in my fury; and their blood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all mine apparel. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redeemed was come."

Here is the Messenger of the covenant, a Refiner's fire, a purifier of the sons of Levi. "He shall set up an ensign for the nations and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." "For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth." "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him." "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle."

Here is an unfolding of the sufficiency of God in His power to transform the earth and to change the shadow of darkness and sin to the ineffable light of His glory. What He hath promised will He not fulfill? All of the lines of hope from the first promise of final victory given in Eden to the present hour are focused upon the return of the King in His power, majesty and strength, and He will compass every issue of the ages and vindicate every purpose of God. It is not a marvel that He should come in renovating judgments to the earth:

the marvel must ever be that He, the King of Glory, should bow the heavens and come down to this earth as an unresisting Lamb. The great conquerors of the earth have been mere men who by personality, or favorable conditions, were able to marshal the allegiance of an army of sufficient strength to execute their will; but this One will not be dependent upon a majority and the brute force it represents. His power by which all things were created is sufficient to transform the whole universe, to bind all the forces of darkness and to consummate the hopes of the ages.

Beginning with Rev. xix. 11 there is given the final picture of the return of Christ in power and great glory. Preceding this the Patmos Seer has recorded the events of the great tribulation, the appearance and reign of the Beast, the Man of Sin, and the casting of Satan and his host into the earth. Into the midst of this indescribable anarchy, wickedness and confusion the King appears. And He appears in all His glory. That glory is fourfold.

Ezekiel had seen the celestial beings who are ever before the face of Jehovah and who reflect His glory. Their faces were four: the face of a man, the face of a lion, the face of an ox, and the face of an eagle. There is striking agreement here with the divine manifestation as revealed in the four Gospels. Matthew portrays the Lion King, Mark the Servant Ox, Luke the Man Christ Jesus, and John the Son of God, fittingly symbol-

ized by the eagle. Christ is the sum total of these four revelations. In each manifestation there is a particular glory to be seen: As the Son of God, He had a glory with the Father before the world was; His eternal glory. As the Son of David, He will have another glory, of which the glory of Solomon was only a feeble type. As the Servant of Jehovah, He has a personal glory; for "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and He was among them as one who served. As the Son of Man He had an acquired glory, a name above every name is given unto Him because of His obedience unto death. It is Luke who unfolds the mysteries of the physical birth, childhood and development of the Man Christ Jesus. In this Gospel every coloring is of the "Son of man who came to seek and to save that which is lost."

The four names ascribed to Christ in the final description of His return in power and glory again imply His fourfold glory, and His return is in that full glory of the only begotten of the Father. In this description He is first mentioned as "Faithful and True." This is Jehovah's Servant the Ox, the portrait given to Mark. Under this title it is said of Him that "He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns." A second title ascribed to Him is "The Word of God." The eternal Logos of the Gospel of John. To this title no words seem to be added other than that His saints, His bride, are seen following Him clothed in the spotless white;

the "righteousness of God in Him" (cf. xix. 7, 8); for they shall see Him as He is and be like Him. The third title ascribed to Him is of a "Name which no man knew, but he himself." And with this title it is said "He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood" (cf. Isa. lxiii. 1–4).

These three characters of the Christ are again seen in Phil. ii. 5–11. As the Word of God He was equal with the Father, but deemed that equality no prize to be seized upon. As the Servant of Jehovah, He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of a man. Under the unrevealed title, "A name which no man knew, but he himself," He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. In Heb. x. 5–7, He is seen freely yielding His own body to the will of the Father as a sacrifice, thus bringing into full contrast the insufficiency of the former offerings of bulls and goats: "But a body thou hast prepared me: in burnt-offerings, and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." Returning to the passage in Phil. ii. 5–11, it may be seen that because of this "obedience unto death, even the death of the cross," "God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue

should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." "Jesus" then is the name which no man can know. "His name shall be called Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins." Locked up in this name are the fathomless mercies of God. Who can know the meaning of that obedience, or of that cross? Who can understand His atoning sacrificial death? Eternity cannot suffice to unfold His manifold grace. Truly "Jesus" is a name the full meaning of which "no man can know, but he himself."

Christ is lastly seen in the final picture of His return under the fourth title of "King of kings and Lord of lords," and gathers into Himself a far greater glory, as David's Son, than has yet been known by all the royal families of the earth.

Thus when He shall come in power and great glory that power will be for the transformation of a sin darkened earth, and in that glory will be combined the ineffable glory of the Servant of Jehovah, the Word of God, the acquired glory of the cross, and the earthly glory of the Son of David, King of kings and Lord of lords.

In such a glory His bride will share. For "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." But that outward glory is incomparable with the consolation of the secret chamber where the bride will be at home in the bosom of the Bridegroom. Every tear will be wiped away and with undimmed eye we shall gaze upon His face and go out no more for ever.

XIV

"THY KINGDOM COME"

THE return of Christ, as anticipated in Scripture, is the consummation of all the great purposes of God. It is impossible to seriously trace the mighty movements developed in Scripture without finding that their ultimate issues and realization are dependent upon one of the great events connected with the second coming of Christ. It cannot therefore be expected that a thorough knowledge of the Bible, or a deep interest in its teachings, will be gained apart from the key to Scriptures which His coming forms. Certain historical and doctrinal passages may become familiar, and a self-satisfied mind, which insulates itself from all added light, may result; but this is far removed from the vision which is gained by a life study of the whole text of Scripture.

Real study of the Bible is a habit which is not acquired through educational courses, nor is it apt to be gained later on when the cares of a mature life and the strategy of Satan in keeping these to the fore hinder the gaining of such a blessed, power-giving, sanctifying habit in the child of God. We wrestle against Satan in the higher sphere of heavenly association and realities rather than in the lower sphere of flesh and blood (Eph. vi. 10–12),

and few are awake to claim their deliverance from his withering touch in the most vital issues of their new life and being. A multitude of ministers must confess that they do not actually and habitually study the Bible for themselves, though they may occasionally read it for others. Weak indeed it is for such an one to hastily denounce the only interpretation that will fairly account for the whole body of Truth and which has been the unanimous conclusion of the most eminent Bible expositors throughout the age (knowledge of theology which may depend upon certain proof texts is incomparable with the fuller knowledge of the Scriptures required for exposition); nor is it safe under present conditions, in the face of personal ignorance, to blindly hide behind the opinion of a supposed, or actual majority. All true ministry and service must have a goal, or objective as an incentive in view. Naturally this should be the determination to realize the present purpose of God. The servant, at best, will be "as his Lord" and thus be intelligently aiming at the immediate divine objective, knowing that the ultimate blessings can be secured by no other program.

There is to be a kingdom of righteousness in the earth: it does not follow, however, that its establishment is the present purpose of God, or that the saved ones of this age are to form its subjects. Such a conclusion might be gained from human guesses, or superficial reading, but could hardly be the result of careful study of "present truth" as

presented in the New Testament. There will be no establishment of an earthly kingdom apart from the coming and presence of the King and that event, in turn, must await the accomplishment of all divine purposes in this mystery age. To be intelligently adjusted to the present divine undertakings is to be committed to a very special form of service and to be working toward a very different goal than the bringing in of a kingdom by undertaking world-wide conversion. It is a matter of obedience to the more simple direction to evangelize all nations, which is not to be done once for all as an objective, but must be done anew with each succeeding generation until the real objective is accomplished,—the out-calling of the church. Apart from the question of divine command, the earthly blessings will be conceded to be nearer when depending on His imminent return than when resting upon any approach to world-wide conversion that has yet been displayed. Is not the testimony of nineteen centuries sufficient witness to the divine purpose in this age apart from revelation? If we believe that God is able to realize His own will and purpose at a given time, we must conclude that world-wide conversion has not been His present age purpose. It is needless to add that He is suffering no such defeat, but is faithfully following the exact plan He has disclosed in His Word. It is for every child of God to know the exact plan He has disclosed and to be wholly subject to it, else his ignorant service may but play

into the hands of the enemy of God and add to the final bonfire of wood, hay and stubble.

In the Scriptures the return of Christ is presented as a full development of the purpose of God:

First, It accomplishes the cessation of much of the present form of evil. A theory that evil will grow less and less until it vanishes from the earth is not a doctrine of the Scriptures. There sin is faithfully traced from its beginning in the fall of Satan, and is seen to run its course and to be suddenly terminated in the hour of its fullest manifestation; and all this is in the permissive will and restraining power of God. The following Scriptures show that the return of Christ will terminate the sin and confusion of the earth: 2 Thess. ii. 7–10; Dan. ii. 44; vii. 13, 14; Mal. iv. 1; Jude 14, 15; Mt. xxiv. 15–30; Rev. xi. 7–xiii. 18; xix. 11–xx. 3.

Second, As certainly as the saved ones of this dispensation have all their hope and blessing in the heavenly glory so certainly it all awaits His coming to claim His own. Even those who have fallen asleep in Jesus await their immortal bodies and that blessed marriage to Him. All saints await His coming to receive His bride (Jno. xiv. 1–3). Their rewards will then be bestowed (2 Tim. iv. 8; 2 Cor. v. 10). Their marriage bliss awaits His call (Rev. xix. 7, 8). So, also, the appointments to authority as co-reigners with Him (Rev. ii. 26, 27; xx. 6). How can the church, if she be true to the spiritual vision, do otherwise than to pray, "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus"?

Third, The final Gentile blessings await His return, as well as their judgment as nations. Two Gentile purposes are now revealed: first, He is visiting the Gentiles to call out a bride; and second, there will be universal Gentile blessing when the kingdom is finally manifested in the earth (Acts xv. 14–18; Rom. xv. 8–12; Mal. i. 11; Jer. xvi. 19; Isa. xi. 10).

Fourth, Creation must groan and travail until His return: "For the earnest expectation of creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God," —but when will they be manifested? "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory,"—"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. viii. 19–23). This, too, is a well defined time, "For our citizenship is in heaven from whence we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change this body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." All creation, then, awaits the deliverance and blessing that will be wrought by His return.

Fifth, His return in glory ushers in the earthly

kingdom and ends the long night of Israel's affliction. Their Messiah truly cometh, but in His own time. From the following passages, which might be greatly multiplied, it may be concluded that there is no divine expectation of the long awaited earthly kingdom apart from the return of the King as He comes in power and great glory: Deut. xxx. 3; Ps. l. 1–6; Dan. ii. 44, 45; vii. 13, 14; Zech. ii. 10–12; xiv. 4–8; Mal. iv. 1–4; Mt. xxiv. 30, 31, 34; Rom. xi. 25–27; Rev. xii. 9, 10; xix. 11–xx. 6.

Three accounts are given in the Scriptures of the transfiguration, and each is preceded by the significant words: "There be some standing here, that shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." The meaning of the transfiguration is given by Peter, an "eyewitness": "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. i. 16–18).

Here Peter affirms by the Spirit that the scene on the holy mount was a revelation of the "power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." The essential elements of the future earthly kingdom were all represented in this scene. Christ appears in His

heavenly glory; two were with Him, sharing in the glory. One had gone to be with the Lord by death, and one by translation; but both were equally glorified together with the Lord. Upon the earth were representatives of the chosen nation. These were not in the transfiguration glory, but were in such blessing that one could say, "It is good for us to be here." So shall it be in the final manifestation of the Messianic kingdom in the earth. The church will be with Him and share His glory and reign. The nation, and through them all nations, will live in His millennial blessing and reign. There were some standing there who did not taste death until they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

To fully outline the character and blessedness of that coming age would require the quotation of a great portion of the messages of the prophets in which language seems to fail them to fully paint the glory of the transformed earth. A selection of passages, indicating the character of the Messianic kingdom, has been given in Chapter III. By these Scriptures this kingdom is seen to be:

1. *Theocratic.* The King will be Immanuel and by human birth a rightful heir to David's throne. Himself born of a virgin in Bethlehem of Judea.

2. Immanuel's kingdom will be *heavenly in character* in that the God of heaven will rule in the earth. His will to be done in earth as it is done in heaven.

3. Immanuel's kingdom will be *in the earth*, rather than in heaven, and centered at Jerusalem. His blessed reign will be over regathered and converted Israel and extend through them to the nations.

4. Immanuel's kingdom will be *realized only by virtue of the power and presence of the returning King.*

5. Immanuel's kingdom, though material and political, *will be spiritual* in that its subjects will walk on the earth in the undimmed light of God.

The animal kingdom will be subdued: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. xi. 6–9). So, also, the physical creation shall be changed: "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the nills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a

name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Isa. lv. 12, 13). "When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together. That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it" (Isa. xli. 17–20).

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. ii. 14). "The meek shall inherit the earth" (Mt. v. 5). "And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Mic. iv. 3). "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert" (Isa. xxxv. 5, 6). "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel.

After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sins no more" (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34). "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isa. ix. 6, 7). "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only

doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen" (Ps. lxxii. 8–11, 17–19).

Such is Immanuel's kingdom in the earth. Such is the covenant of peace with Israel for ever.

At the close of this millennium of peace and righteousness there is the dark picture of the final testing of all willing separation from God in the loosing of Satan for a "little season" and the war that follows. The Great White Throne is set; its judgment is past; and lo, the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The revolt of earth and the powers of darkness against the sovereignty of God is for ever past. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

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